

Teacher Quality Roadmap

Improving Policies
and Practices in
Pittsburgh Public Schools

May 2014



National Council on Teacher Quality



ABOUT THIS STUDY

This study was undertaken on behalf of the 26,000 children who attend the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

ABOUT NCTQ

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) is a non-partisan research and policy organization committed to restructuring the teaching profession, led by our vision that every child deserves effective teachers.

PARTNERS AND FUNDERS

This study was done in partnership with A+ Schools, Pittsburgh's Community Alliance for Public Education and the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh. Additional funding for this study was provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

THE NCTQ TEAM FOR THIS PROJECT

Angel Gonzalez, Sudipti Kumar, and Nancy Waymack

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Standard 1: Staffing	9
Standard 2: Evaluation	27
Standard 3: Talent Management	43
Standard 4: Compensation	55
Standard 5: Professional Culture	63
Appendices	75





Introduction

The Pittsburgh Public Schools study is the 12th district study undertaken by the National Council on Teacher Quality since we began studying districts in-depth in 2009.

The intent of these studies is to give select communities a comprehensive look at what is happening in their local school districts that may be either helping or hurting teacher quality. We seek to increase the community's understanding of policies and practices that too often are understood only by insiders. We present this information in easily understood language, with the idea that communities benefit if all constituents are on the same playing field.

Snapshot of Pittsburgh Public Schools:

- Second largest school district in Pennsylvania
- 55 schools
- Per pupil spending: \$18,400¹

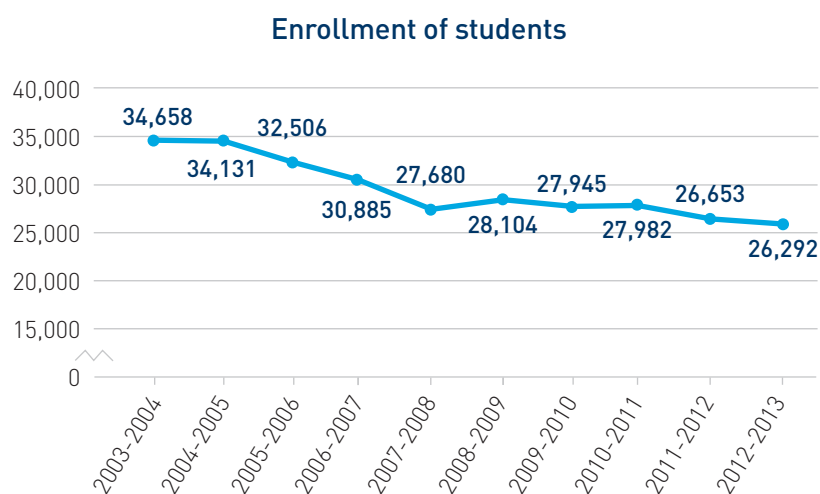
Pittsburgh Public Schools

Pittsburgh students	Pittsburgh teachers
26,292 K-12 students	1,757 K-12 teachers
55 percent Black or African American	14 percent Black or African American
33 percent White	85 percent White
6.5 percent Multiracial	0.1 percent Multi-Racial/Not Applicable
3 percent Asian	1 percent Asian/Pacific Islander
2 percent Hispanic	0.4 percent Hispanic
< 0.1 percent American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.1 percent American Indian/Alaskan Native
71 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunch	Average experience: 14 years
18 percent students with disabilities	18 percent with over 20 years of experience
6 percent English language learners	Average teacher salary: \$73,446

After the decline of the manufacturing and steel industry in the United States, Pittsburgh, much like other cities in the Rust Belt, faced a dramatic decrease in population and growth. Over the last 30 years, the city has lost nearly half of its population.

¹ This calculation excludes "unusual" spending categories (e.g., charter payments, debt service) and includes general and supplemental funds. Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education.

While the economy of Pittsburgh has been largely revitalized over the last few decades by the health, technology and higher education sectors, the vibrancy of the school district is still challenged by a declining birth rate and the introduction of public charter school options.² The good news is that the enrollment decline is slowing down.



Pittsburgh Public Schools' enrollment has decreased by almost 10,000 students in the last 10 years.

Officials in Pittsburgh Public Schools describe it as a challenging place; that is, it is struggling to stabilize enrollment and the current level of spending is widely considered to be unsustainable. However, even with these persistent challenges, Pittsburgh is a recognized leader in education reform on the national stage, particularly with respect to teacher evaluation and compensation policies.

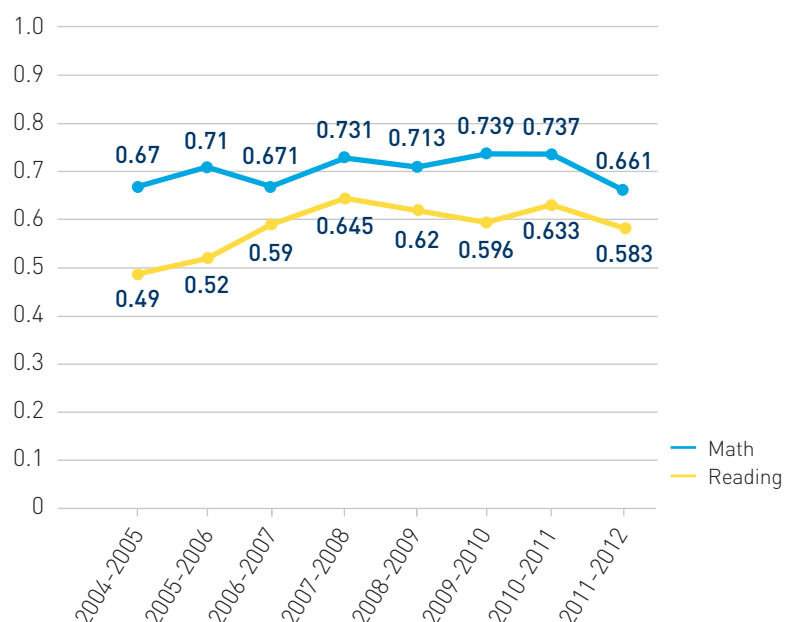
Academically, Pittsburgh has demonstrated progress in the past decade, but important indicators make clear that it still lags behind the state average.

- Like many urban districts, Pittsburgh students do not perform as well as their suburban counterparts. In 2012-2013, the number of students who reached proficient or advanced on the 3rd grade state test (the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment) was 15 percent lower in mathematics than the state average (65 percent versus 80 percent) and 16 percent lower in reading (55 percent versus 71 percent).
- The past two years have shown relatively significant declines across the state, including Pittsburgh, in overall student test scores in math and reading across all grades. From 2012 to 2013, the percentage of Pittsburgh students who scored proficient or advanced in mathematics declined from 62 percent to 58 percent and in reading from 57 percent to 51 percent.³

2 Public School Enrollment Reports. Pennsylvania Department of Education. http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/enrollment/7407/public_school_enrollment_reports/620541

3 Pittsburgh Public Schools press release. [October 2013]. *Results on 2013 State Accountability Exams Vary - PSSA Declines, keystones Show Promise and District Exceeds Standards for Academic Growth*. file:///C:/Users/analyst14/Downloads/SPP_Release%20(1).pdf

Percentage of proficient and advanced students 2004-2012
3rd grade PSSA



A little more than half of Pittsburgh 3rd graders are proficient or advanced in reading. Two-thirds of the students are proficient or advanced in math.

- Most Pittsburgh high schools have improved four-year graduation rates; however, the 68 percent graduation rate for 2012-2013 was 15 percent below the state average.⁴

Recognizing the need for action, Pittsburgh Public Schools has undertaken some important measures. First, in 2008, the district and the city of Pittsburgh initiated the Pittsburgh Promise, an initiative to send eligible youth in the district to college through scholarships.⁵ As of April 2014, the program had awarded almost \$50 million in scholarships.

In addition, in 2009, the school district and the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers began a collaboration to redesign teacher policies in the district, including those affecting teacher evaluation, compensation and career advancement. Five years later, the level of collaboration between the district and union is being tested. Enrollment and funding woes continue to add a level of difficulty to the mix; Pittsburgh Public Schools is facing insolvency in just three years if annual expenditures are not reduced.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The Pittsburgh Promise is now run by an independent organization.

Underlying conditions for success

There are certain underlying conditions we believe make it easier to implement this report's recommendations.

Condition 1: The district has strong data management systems in place and uses them effectively.

***What we found:** While the district's data management systems are stronger than in most other places NCTQ has studied, there are some concerns about sustainability and alignment across departments.*

For each district study it conducts, NCTQ requests a host of personnel data, and Pittsburgh Public Schools was able to provide approximately 80 percent of that data (see Appendix A: Data Dashboard). Compared to other districts NCTQ has studied, Pittsburgh data management systems are more developed and sophisticated, and district staff are generally knowledgeable about the available data and its uses.

Effective use of data requires collecting and maintaining accurate data as well as analysis and use of that data to drive decisions. The district has demonstrated that it is both willing and capable of using data to drive action. For example, the district is considering teacher observation and student survey data to help inform decisions about selecting teachers for leadership roles. The district has also collected teacher survey data to help understand complex human capital issues such as transfers and retention.

The district staff raised some concerns about the sustainability of using data to drive decision making as this process is fairly new for the district and challenges have arisen connected with data usage across departments. NCTQ noticed this in specific instances as well, e.g., the district's use of multiple strategies to categorize schools as high need, depending on the department (discussed in section 1.2).

Condition 2: Communication between the district office and school staff and between teachers and administrators is consistent and flows both ways. Feedback is encouraged.

***What we found:** The district engages teachers to gain their input on new initiatives; however, there is some frustration that final decisions do not always reflect teacher feedback.*

The district has gone to great lengths to engage teachers in decision making, and there is a long history of reaching out for teacher input on new initiatives. When the new teacher evaluation and development system, known as Empowering Effective Teachers, was in development, the district engaged teachers in multiple ways, including focus groups, teacher committees and direct union collaboration.



This open approach does not mean that there are no longer communication problems, but relative to many other districts, Pittsburgh compares favorably in this regard. Both teachers and principals voice concerns and frustration with the central office. And while acknowledging that the district seeks their input on some issues, in surveys teachers report that final decisions often do not reflect that input.⁶

Condition 3: The union and the district have a history of collaboration.

***What we found:** In general, the union and the district have been collaborators in moving policies forward to improve outcomes for students.*

In recent years, Pittsburgh Public Schools has worked with the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers to improve the quality of teaching in the district. This collaboration has been the source of numerous accolades and has been cited as a model for other cities to follow.⁷

There have been some disagreements, including on the implementation of the evaluation system, which has made recent headlines,⁸ and a disagreement over the district's implementation of its teacher residency academies (see section 1.1). In interviews, however, numerous district staff noted that, regardless of the dispute, the relationship between the district and the union is still collaborative, and they work together on a regular basis. This type of relationship is unusual in many districts, and sets Pittsburgh up well for enacting recommendations that NCTQ makes in this study as well as other initiatives.

It feels that the district has an agenda, teachers are brought in to contribute to an appearance of greater-than-actual collaboration.

– Pittsburgh teacher

⁶ NCTQ survey of Pittsburgh teachers. March 2014.

⁷ Hamill, Sean D. (June 2011). *Forging a New Partnership: The Story of Teacher Union and School District Collaboration in Pittsburgh*. The Aspen Institute. <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/forging-new-partnership-story-teacher-union-school-district-collaboration-pittsburgh>

⁸ Chute, Eleanor. (January 12 2014). *Teacher Evaluation Fight May Prove Costly*. Pittsburgh Post Gazette. <http://www.post-gazette.com/local/city/2014/01/13/Teacher-evaluation-fight-may-prove-costly/stories/201401130116>

Condition 4: The district and union work together to effectively advocate for resources.

***What we found:** The district and the union have worked together in the past to receive funding to support new initiatives.*

In 2009, Pittsburgh was selected as an “investment district” by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, one of only four districts across the country to each receive 40 million dollars to maximize teacher effectiveness within the district. Pittsburgh received this money because the union and the district have made a commitment together to make a series of changes advancing teacher quality. This funding was complimented by a federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant of up to an additional 38 million dollars.

Methodology for this study

In undertaking this study, a team of NCTQ analysts first reviewed the district’s current collective bargaining agreement with the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers. We also looked at state laws and regulations affecting local policies. We compared the laws and policies in Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania with the more than 100 school districts found in the NCTQ Teacher Contract Database.⁹ This exercise allowed us to determine where Pittsburgh falls along the spectrum of teacher quality policies and to identify practices that the district might emulate. In a number of areas, we also collected data from school districts that surround Pittsburgh, are demographically similar, and are its biggest competitors for teacher talent.

NCTQ met with principals and the district administrators to deepen its understanding of how policies play out in practice. We also spoke with students, parents and community leaders to hear about their experiences in Pittsburgh, which shaped the focus of our study.

We conducted surveys of teachers and principals to gain a broader sense of staff attitudes and experiences. The number of responses to the school leader survey was robust: Over 50 percent of school leaders responded. Data from the survey appear in multiple areas of this report, as do quotations from the surveys and/or focus group meetings. Note that the quotations are not necessarily statements of fact, but rather represent a variety of teacher, principal and district official perceptions about Pittsburgh policies and practices. While NCTQ’s teacher survey did not have a response rate that provided a large sample size, responses from over 100 teachers provided additional context on how policies play out in individual schools and classrooms. Quotes from the teacher survey are included in the report, as are data from the Pittsburgh Teaching and Learning Conditions survey, administered annually the district, which had a response rate of over 90 percent in 2012.¹⁰

⁹ <http://www.nctq.org/districtPolicy/contractDatabaseLanding.do>

¹⁰ Pittsburgh Teaching and Learning Conditions survey. <http://2012.pittsburghteachingconditions.org/reports/detailed.php?orgID=02745>



Finally, we looked at a range of teacher personnel data to give us a better understanding of the outcomes of teacher hiring, transfer, evaluation, attendance and compensation policies. We shared a draft of our analysis with the district and the union to verify its accuracy, and both provided valuable feedback that was incorporated into the final draft of our report. NCTQ is grateful to the district for their full participation in this study, as well as to our local partners A+ Schools and The Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh. NCTQ also reached out to the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers for their support of teacher focus groups as well as for direct input. They declined to provide assistance but did provide feedback that was helpful to the final report.

What this report seeks to accomplish

NCTQ frames this analysis around five standards supported by research and best practices from the field that are necessary for improving teacher quality.

Staffing: District policies facilitate schools' access to teacher talent.

Evaluation: Evaluation systems are implemented thoughtfully and with key elements in place to cultivate, recognize and reward good teaching.

Talent Management: The district has the systems in place to develop effective teachers and exit poorly performing ones.

Compensation: Salary and benefits are strategically targeted to attract and reward high-quality teachers, especially teachers in hard-to-staff positions.

Professional Culture: Policies encourage a professional and collaborative culture.

For each standard we provide several recommendations making it clear which authority is in a position to implement the recommendation; that is, Pittsburgh Public Schools through executive action or an action of the school board, Pittsburgh Public Schools and the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers, or the state.



This symbol reflects practices that the district can initiate administratively either through administrative action or a change in school board policy.



This symbol accompanies recommendations whose implementation requires negotiation between the school district and the teachers' union.



This symbol accompanies recommendations that require a change in state policy.



Standard 1.

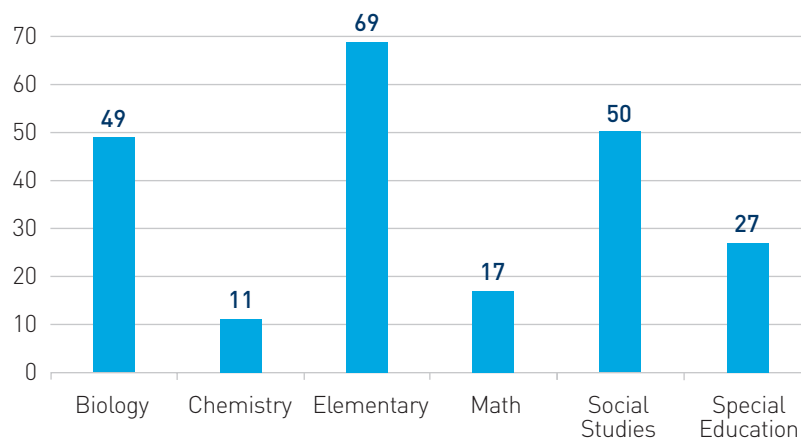
Staffing

1.1 The district recruits an ample supply of candidates who have the personal and professional characteristics found to correlate with teacher effectiveness.

Finding: Pittsburgh has sufficient numbers of applicants for its teaching positions, but the quality of these applications is less certain, especially when it comes to hard-to-fill positions.

Given Pittsburgh's shrinking size, declining student enrollment and budget reductions, its hiring numbers have naturally shrunk. On an annual basis, the district typically hires only about 100 new teachers a year.¹¹ Whereas many large urban districts find themselves overwhelmed each year by the number of new hires they need to make, Pittsburgh should be able to implement a carefully considered, highly deliberative process. In general, the number of applicants per vacancy is sufficient, although there are variations across certification areas.

Numbers of applications per vacancy



For each elementary vacancy, the district had almost 70 applicants, which is common among districts. In traditionally high-shortage areas such as chemistry and math, the district still has a relatively good number of applicants per vacancy.

¹¹ Conservative estimates based on class sizes of 25 students. For secondary teachers, this assumes that the teacher teaches four separate classes of students.

New hires

Pennsylvania state law places certain restrictions on new hires into the district that only affect Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. These two districts are required by a state law to hire from an “eligibility list.”¹²

Pittsburgh and Philadelphia are both prohibited by law from hiring a teacher who does not fall within the top 10 percent of ranked applicants (or the top five names, whichever is greater).¹³ This unusually prescriptive state law provides a modicum of local flexibility, but it is unusual for the state to weigh in on a district’s hiring authority and even more unusual for a law to be restricted to only two districts in a state. The two districts are free to determine the criteria used for the rankings. In 2009, Pittsburgh made some adjustments to the criteria they use to better align their initial screening with characteristics known to be correlated with effective teaching. They settled on three main components: experience and performance, a survey that screens candidates on qualities correlating with teacher quality and a writing sample. Within these three, the most weight is given to experience and performance.¹⁴

Principals we spoke to voiced frustration with this process, noting that many teachers they knew to be high-quality candidates (such as long-term substitutes working in their buildings) did not make it into the top 10 percent of the eligibility list. Central office staff also noted that eligibility lists were unnecessarily restrictive. They often heard from principals about high-quality candidates who simply did not make it to the top few positions in the group.

To work within the law’s parameters, when a principal indicates that a high-quality candidate has not made it to the top 10 percent of the eligibility list, the district will work with applicants to further hone their application. Undoubtedly, however, some candidates move on to opportunities in other districts where requirements are not as restrictive.

Because teachers apply centrally based on certification area rather than to particular positions in certain schools, principals for high-need, hard-to-staff schools noted that, while there were several names listed on an eligibility list, far fewer were interested in positions in high-need schools. They cited examples of long eligibility lists where they were unable to find a single candidate interested in actually coming to their particular school for an interview.

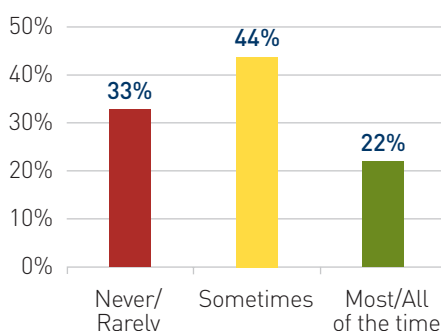
12 Pennsylvania School Code of 1949, Act 14 “Each school district having a population of one million (1,000,000), or more, shall be a school district of the first class. Each school district having a population of two hundred fifty thousand (250,000), or more, but of less than one million (1,000,000), shall be a school district of the first class A. In accordance with 24 P.S. §21-2110, the Board of Public Education in each school district of the first class shall prescribe the mode or modes of determining qualifications of applicants for positions as Residents in The Teacher Academy of the district and hire professional employees whose names appear among the top five names upon the proper eligible list, or within the top 10 percent (10 percent) of the names upon the list, whichever is greater.

13 Ibid.

14 For the experience/performance component, ranking will be based on a resume/application review of predefined performance and leadership indicators. In the 2014-2015 hiring season, ranking criteria will include bonus points to ensure candidates are recognized for proven exemplary performance within Pittsburgh Public Schools. Full-time substitutes and student teachers are most likely to have classroom observations and other documentation that would allow the Human Resources team to gain insight on their performance. Assessments would be performed by screeners designated by Human Resources.



Survey Responses: The teacher hiring process in the district meets my needs



Principals view the hiring system as “hit or miss.”

Sources of Candidates

In the first or second year of teaching, teachers face a steep learning curve.¹⁵ The better prepared they are to deal with the pragmatic realities of the classroom, the gentler this curve is likely to be. In June 2013, NCTQ produced its first annual *Teacher Prep Review*, a rating of the quality of the teacher preparation programs in the United States, including many of the programs that provide teachers to Pittsburgh Public Schools. This report detailed what coursework and fieldwork teacher preparation programs should require to ensure that teachers are as ready as possible before stepping into the classroom.

According to 2012-2013 data, about half of all teacher applicants to Pittsburgh schools applied immediately after completing their undergraduate degrees, while the rest applied after graduate school. Of the teachers who applied after earning their bachelor's degree, about half applied from the same 10 institutions, the largest of which were Indiana University of Pennsylvania and the University of Pittsburgh.¹⁶

There are 23 people on an eligibility list. People say they are not interested in applying for your school, but you line up whatever interviews that you can.

– Pittsburgh Principal

15 Gordon, R., Kane, T. J., & Staiger, D. O. (2006). *Identifying effective teachers using performance on the job* (Hamilton Project Discussion Paper). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

16 While University of Pittsburgh is a large supplier of teachers to Pittsburgh, they are not included in the above analysis because of the non-traditional structure of their program creating an apples-to-oranges comparison with other programs.

An analysis of the programs feeding teachers into the Pittsburgh school system show that no single program stands out for meeting the full range of needs of a new teacher. In particular, no program in the area addresses the need for elementary teachers to have a solid grounding across all subject areas, with notable weaknesses in their preparation for teaching reading and in science and social studies. We were able to identify stronger teacher preparation programs a few hours away in Ohio and Maryland. (A list of these institutions and a description of NCTQ's standards is listed in Appendix B.)

Below is a look at how institutions in the Pittsburgh vicinity prepare teachers in key standards of elementary teacher preparation, indicating that the district can look to options outside the immediate Pittsburgh area when recruiting teachers for elementary positions.

Ratings of Pennsylvania institutions in key areas of elementary teacher preparation

Top providers of teacher applicants to Pittsburgh	Percentage of applicants	Program rating	Selectivity in program admissions	Preparation in reading instruction	Preparation for teaching elementary math	Preparation to teach to college and career ready standards	High quality opportunities to practice teaching
Indiana University of Pennsylvania	8.5%	2	4	0	4	0	0
Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania	6.8%	1	2	1	1	0	0
California University of Pennsylvania	5.4%	0	0	1	0	1	0
Pennsylvania State University	4.8%	1.5	4	0	0	0	0
Duquesne University	4.0%	NR	4	NR	1	0	0
Clarion University of Pennsylvania	3.4%	0	0	3	1	0	0
Edinboro University of Pennsylvania	3.1%	1	0	2	3	1	0
Carlow University	2.5%	NR	4	NR	0	0	NR
Point Park University	2.1%	NR	4	NR	NR	1	NR

Programs were rated on a scale of 0 to 4, with 4 being the highest. Where institutions declined to provide us with data, we were not able to provide a rating (marked as "NR").¹⁷

17 To determine selectivity, NCTQ reviewed program admissions standards and institutions' overall student profiles, assessing whether programs generally drew from the top half of the college-going population.

To determine the quality of reading preparation, NCTQ reviewed lectures, assignments and textbooks to see if teachers were being trained to use scientifically based reading instructional techniques.

To determine the quality of math preparation, NCTQ reviewed lectures and textbooks in content and methods courses to see whether teachers were getting the training necessary to teach math to young children.

To determine whether teachers are being readied to teach to college- and career-ready standards, NCTQ reviewed course requirements and descriptions to see whether teachers are getting the full breadth of content knowledge necessary to teach the elementary curriculum.

To determine the quality of practice teaching experiences, NCTQ reviewed student teaching handbooks and agreements between programs and districts to see whether programs ensure that candidates are placed with effective teachers who have the capacity to serve as mentors.



There is no doubt that even programs with low rankings often produce high-quality applicants. However, many programs fail to provide the training that would allow all candidates to begin more successfully, especially new teachers who are going into more challenging, high-poverty schools.

Finding: While Pittsburgh recently started collecting data on the institution that prepared their teachers, it is not yet using this information.

Through its applicant tracking system, Pittsburgh recently began to systematically track the name of the institution that prepared teacher candidates; however, it is not tracking the specific program within the institution that prepared the teacher. Since programs on the same campus sometimes vary significantly in quality and operate quite independently of one another, it is important that Pittsburgh also identify the program. The district has not yet started to analyze this data.

In 2013, New York City introduced a report card that takes stock of teacher preparation programs at 12 institutions. The reports provide data on the certification areas in which teachers are hired, the percentage of graduates working at high-need schools, retention rates, and program effectiveness. This allows the district to make better recruitment and hiring decisions based on real data on the quality of that program.

Finding: There were initial attempts to expand sources of new teachers; however, these attempts failed.

In the past few years, Superintendent Lane initiated some efforts to broaden and improve the quality of the teacher pipeline into the district. This included a potential partnership with Teach For America (TFA) to recruit a small number of teachers to work in hard-to-staff schools while also increasing the diversity of the teaching corps.¹⁸ While a contract with TFA was initially approved, the newly elected school board rescinded it in December 2013, with some board members expressing concern over the qualifications of TFA teachers.

In 2011, the district, in partnership with TNTP, initiated a plan to start a teacher academy at two schools. For the new teacher residents, it was to be a year-long model of teacher instruction combining on-the-ground training alongside graduate coursework. Shortly thereafter, budget concerns came to light increasing the likelihood of teacher layoffs. Given seniority provisions in state law and the teachers' contract, these new teacher residents would have lost their job in a layoff first unless an exception could have been negotiated. No exceptions were negotiated so the district decided to scrap the program.¹⁹

Both of these attempts illustrate the district's eagerness to embrace new sources of high-quality teachers. Additional strategies the district can undertake are noted in the recommendations section.

18 Zullo, Robert . (December 11, 2013). *Teach For America contract faces skeptical Pittsburgh School Board members*. <http://www.post-gazette.com/news/education/2013/12/12/Teach-For-America-contract-faces-skeptical-school-board-members/stories/201312120263>

19 PPS press release. (June 2011). *District Eliminates Teacher Academy*. <http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/cms/lib07/PA01000449/Centricity/Domain/30/Document%20Library/622011Release-District-Eliminates-Teacher-Academy.pdf>

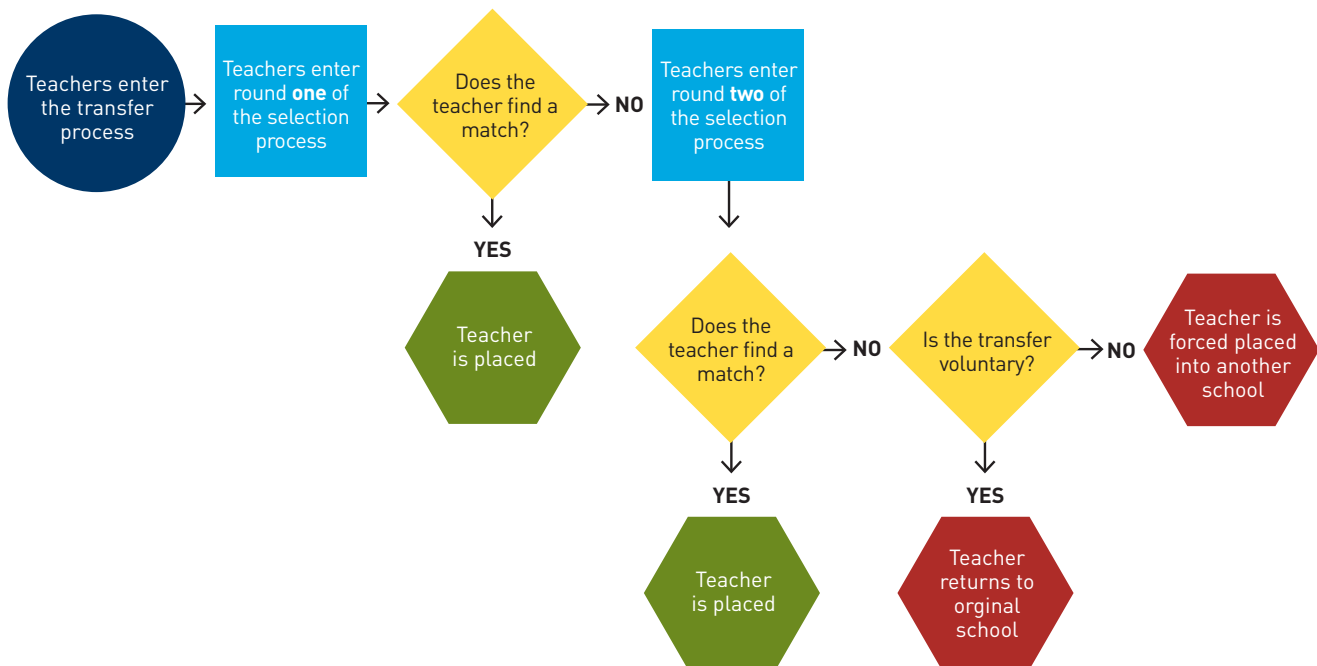
1.2 Principals and/or school committees select applicants they wish to interview and have the final say over teacher assignment.

Finding: Principals in Pittsburgh are unusually constrained in their ability to successfully staff their schools.

Hiring autonomy is arguably the most important factor principals have when trying to ensure strong teacher quality. Districts sometimes forget that principals have both the experience and the vested interest in making a good hire that someone in the central office might not have. A study examining data from New York City public schools (where mutual consent hiring is established in the contract) found that principals, when given the opportunity to select their own teachers, make different decisions than central office staff; for example, they pay more attention to the quality of the candidates' preservice preparation and to assessing their teaching skills. Principals in this study appear to be better positioned to judge an applicant's ability to be effective.²⁰

In Section 1.1 we presented the unusual limitations Pennsylvania state law places on principals when it comes to selecting new teachers. Here we focus on principals' autonomy when teachers already employed in the district seek to voluntarily transfer to other schools or have been displaced (e.g., lost their position due to budgetary constraints, school closures, or programmatic changes) from another school.

Placement process for voluntary and involuntary transfers



In June of each year, after the two hiring rounds are over, the central office tries to match unassigned teachers with the right assignment.²¹ If no match results, the district force places teachers who would otherwise not have a position, whether or not a school has requested the teacher.

20 Boyd, D., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., Ronfeldt, M., & Wyckoff, J. (2010). *The role of teacher quality in retention and hiring: Using applications-to-transfer to uncover preferences of teachers and schools*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

21 Staffing Process and Timeline for SY 13-14. Source: Pittsburgh Public Schools



Rounds One and Two: The voluntary transfer period

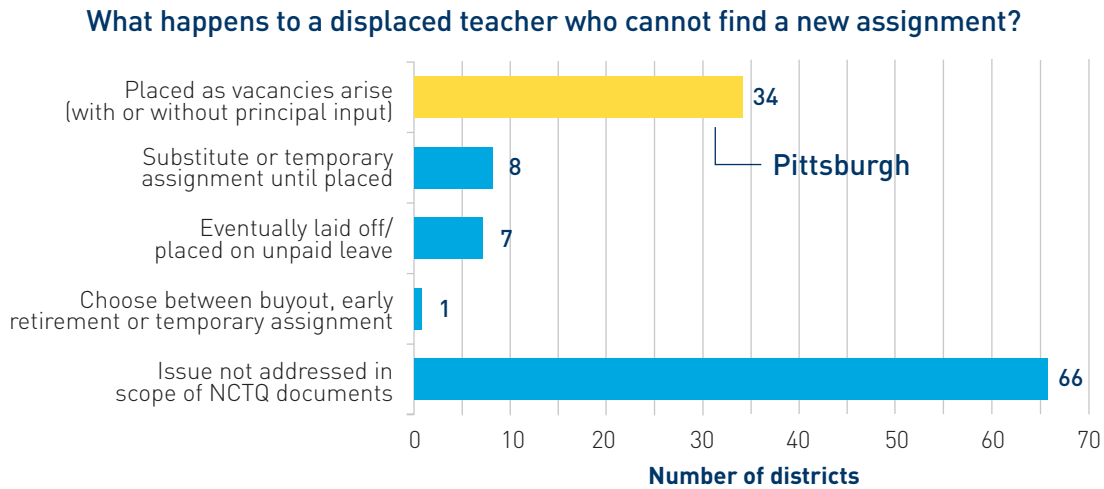
In Pittsburgh, as in most districts, tenured teachers have the option to seek a voluntary transfer across schools if they so choose. The process in Pittsburgh also allows displaced teachers (those who have lost their current assignment due to budget cuts or school closings) to opt into the voluntary transfer pool rather than wait to be matched by the district later in the process. This voluntary transfer period, which is the first step in the internal hiring process, occurs in two rounds and is based on specific calendar dates set by the district. Having two rounds gives the district the opportunity to post new vacancies based on additional information such as new resignations and retirements that came in after the first round began. However, it also lengthens the hiring timeline before schools can consider new teacher applicants, as this period spans two months (early April to late May).²²

Staff Matching Period

Voluntary transfers who do not find a new position in rounds one or two return to their current school assignment. Displaced teachers, on the other hand, are guaranteed a new assignment even if they were unable to secure a new position on their own. To begin this process, displaced teachers without a placement fill out preference sheets, as do principals, and then the district makes an attempt to match teachers with openings based on these preferences. In the 2013-2014 school year, the district began to use evaluation rating information to inform matches. For example, teachers on an Employee Improvement Plan (meaning they received an unsatisfactory rating) were specifically not reassigned to high-need schools.

Given that districts are obligated by their contracts to continue to pay a full salary to teachers who lose their assignment, most districts resort to force placements for displaced teachers regardless of principal preferences. There are, however, a growing number of alternative practices. Little Rock, Arkansas; Chicago; Houston; and Douglas County, Colorado, all give teachers temporary assignments, including positions as substitutes, while the teachers continue to look for a permanent position. Some districts have the latitude to lay off a teacher who cannot find a job within a year, although Pittsburgh currently does not have that authority under Pennsylvania state law.

22 PFT-PPS teachers' contract. Article 38: Teacher vacancy lists. It is important to note that the teachers' contract establishes six rounds of posting, beginning in December and ending in July but the district and the union have reached an agreement to limit this to only two rounds.



In only six districts in NCTQ's teacher contract database are teachers exited out of the school system—via layoffs, unpaid leave, early retirement, or buyouts—if they are excessed and unable to secure a new assignment. In most districts, displacement does not lead to layoffs.

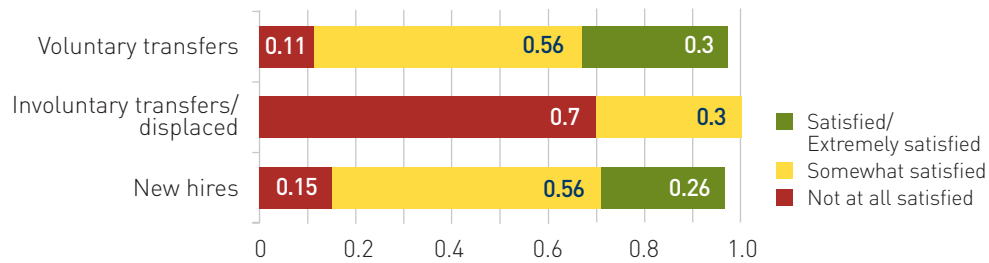
Once the staff-matching process is completed, and if additional vacancies still exist, principals are then allowed to try and hire a teacher from outside the district (described in Standard 1.1). This process generally occurs in the late summer months.

Finding: Principals are mostly dissatisfied with teachers from the displaced pool but are not overwhelmingly satisfied with candidates from any source.

In studying other districts, NCTQ has seen that principal satisfaction with their hires is directly correlated to the level of autonomy they have in hiring them. Generally, we find that principals are most satisfied with the quality of new hires because they have the most authority to choose these applicants. However, given the state-mandated restrictions described in Section 1.1, Pittsburgh's principals do not have as much authority over new hires as is customary. This may explain why Pittsburgh principals do not mirror the opinions of other districts, with principals in Pittsburgh reporting that they are equally satisfied in general with the quality of both voluntary transfers and new hires. In fact, since the source of new hires is only the district-wide eligibility pool described in Section 1.1, principals clearly have less ability to recruit and hire new teachers.



How satisfied are you with teachers from the following sources?



The majority of principals were at least “somewhat satisfied” with teachers transferring voluntarily or being hired from outside the district. In contrast, 70 percent of principals surveyed said that they were “not at all satisfied” with teachers who were placed at their schools through involuntary transfers

Finding: High-need schools have a particularly hard time filling positions in Pittsburgh.

The district has developed a fairly sophisticated but arguably confusing formula to determine which schools are considered high need, at least in the context of teacher assignment. These schools, termed “staffing support” schools, are not necessarily the same schools defined as high need in other contexts but are generally a smaller subset of the schools defined as meeting the district’s definition of high minority, high low income and high impact.^{23,24} Identified in part by higher free and reduced-price lunch rates and lower scores on state exams, staffing support schools are more likely to be schools challenged by poverty than the general population of schools in the district.

Different categories of high-need schools (2013-2014)

School	Designated a high-minority/ low-income school	Designated a staffing-support school	Designated a high-impact school
Arlington 3-8	X	X	X
Arsenal PreK-5	X		X
Arsenal 6-8	X		
Faison K-5	X	X	X
Fulton PreK-5	X		
Grandview K-5	X		
King PreK-8	X	X	X
Langley K-8	X	X	X
Lincoln PreK-5	X		X

(cont.)

23 High-minority, high low-income are schools in the top third of percentage for either minority or free and reduced-priced lunch are defined as high minority/high low income by the district.

24 High-impact are schools that require more intensive, regularly scheduled support to improve student outcomes. This is determined by student outcomes, performance management, and climate and culture.

School	Designated a high-minority/low-income school	Designated a staffing-support school	Designated a high-impact school
Manchester PreK-8	X		
Miller PreK-5		X	X
Milliones University Prep 6-12	X	X	X
Morrow PreK-4			X
Perry 9-12		X	X
Schiller 6-8	X	X	
Spring Hill K-5			X
Wiel PreK-5	X		
Westinghouse 6-12	X	X	X
Woolslair K-5			X

During the hiring season for the 2013-2014 school year, central office staff reported providing extra support to these schools. For example, teachers who wanted to voluntarily transfer out of a school were required to attend an open house at one of the staffing support schools. The goal was to encourage more candidates to visit high-need schools and apply for open positions there. Unfortunately, last year this strategy was not effective because some of the staffing support schools did not hold an open house, some schools that did hold them had few attendees, and some transferring teachers completed a survey about their transfer preferences in lieu of attending an open house.

This year, the district is centralizing the open house for staffing support schools, but ensuring that all transferring teachers attend still be an operational challenge.

Finding: The district provides few resources for principals to guide them during the hiring process, and the hiring process varies significantly from school to school.

The interview in the hiring process is one of the most important factors in driving a final decision on an applicant. Particularly, the fit between teacher and school in terms of expectations, leadership style and other factors can be a large component in teacher effectiveness.²⁵

Pittsburgh's central office screening process does not include interviews, in person or by telephone, with new candidates before or after they are placed on the eligibility list. This lack of screening places a heavier burden on principals since they are required to hire from this list. Candidates have gone through an external paper screening process, but they have not been assessed to ensure that they meet basic criteria, nor is there an attempt to ascertain which positions are the best match for them.

25 Jackson, C. Kirabo (2010). *Match quality, worker productivity and worker mobility: Direct evidence from teachers*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.



The Los Angeles Unified School District human resources department conducts a three-step screening process that includes an online application, a request for additional items if applicants meet the basic criteria and an in-person interview. After this, applicants are placed on a list for interviews with principals.

School-based hiring

In Pittsburgh, all internally transferring teachers are interviewed by site-based staff-selection committees. These committees are comprised of school leaders and teachers in the building.

The three available actions of these committees are dictated by the teachers' contract:

1. They can choose to interview no fewer than 25 percent of the pool of teachers who have been displaced from another school in the district, as well as 25 percent of the most senior applicants who applied.
2. They can choose to simply accept the most senior transfer who applies without conducting an interview.
3. They can choose to interview every candidate who applies, forgoing all screening criteria that could limit the number of interviews to a reasonable number.

The district notes that almost all schools opt to interview all candidates who apply, underscoring the importance that schools place on retaining as much decision-making authority as possible. Holding on to this authority, however, means that certain schools may end up having to conduct an abnormally large number of interviews if there is a large pool of applicants. Requiring teachers to include a demonstration lesson can be a particular challenge in this context.

Demonstration lessons

Many districts find that having an applicant teach a demonstration lesson is a good screening mechanism. The practice seems not to have taken hold in Pittsburgh, with some principals stating that it would be difficult to ask voluntary transfers to teach a demonstration lesson because the teachers are generally unavailable during school

Currently principals get the eligibility list, then they go through the process they want.... We want to provide resources for principals and collect data that tracks what they did to hire teachers. It would be good to see if [their strategies] show any differences in the long term.

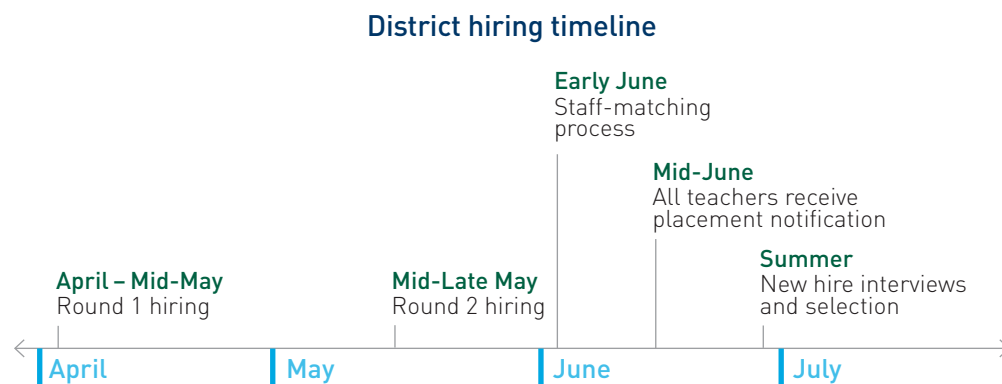
– District official

hours for an interview. The principals also stated that new hires are interviewed in the summer when there are often no students available. While this is true for many districts, principals often find ways to get around this by holding demonstration lessons during summer school, using video submissions or having selection committees role-play as students.

1.3 The district's staffing timeline ensures that almost all vacancies are filled by June of each school year; accordingly, teachers who are retiring and resigning provide notice before transfers occur.

Finding: The majority of new teachers are hired in August.

The district's hiring timeline indicates that the initial vacancy list is posted in mid-April, and the internal transfer process continues until mid-June when the staff-matching process is completed. In early summer (late June) principals begin to select new hires for open positions, but this process can often stretch into August.



The district's goal is to place all voluntary and displaced teachers in new positions before the end of the school year; however, new hires are not interviewed and selected until the summer months.

Persuading teachers who are leaving to provide official notification of their resignation or retirement to the district so that the district can find a suitable replacement is a problem in some districts, including Pittsburgh. For many reasons teachers are reluctant to tell either their principals or the school district they are leaving until the school year is over. They may not want to alert their principals of their impending departure out of fear of retaliation or a concern that they will miss out on benefits such as health insurance over the summer months. In other scenarios, a school administrator may have asked a teacher not to submit retirement or resignation paperwork until after the initial rounds of transferring are complete so that the principal can choose from the pool of new applicants, avoiding having to select a teacher who has been displaced. Displaced teachers are often viewed skeptically by principals, who are aware that a common practice among other principals who wish to remove a teacher is to manipulate positions so that a teacher they would prefer to lose has to be displaced.



To try and counteract this problem, the Pittsburgh teachers' contract provides for a \$500 incentive for teachers who are retiring if they notify the district by January 15th.²⁶ While incentives to submit official notification of retirement are not unusual for school districts, most districts put the deadline in March or April when teachers are more likely to know their plans, rather than January.

In fact, the district's incentive appears to serve little purpose. Of the 62 teachers who retired at the end of the 2012-2013 school year, only 20 percent (13 teachers) received the retirement notification incentive. Because the district does not systematically track when retirement or resignation notifications arrive, it is difficult to do an analysis of actual notification dates after the deadline.

Unless told otherwise, Pittsburgh, like most districts, assumes that teachers will return for the next year and considers their positions filled. Finding out about vacancies late in the hiring timeline means that those positions are not available for teachers who transfer (voluntarily and involuntarily) early in the process, and many external candidates may have already found positions elsewhere before these positions open up.

The Portland Public Schools system in Oregon offers a tiered system of rewards based on when teachers notify the district of their retirement and/or resignation. For notifications received by February 15th, teachers receive a \$1,250 incentive. Teachers who notify by March 15th receive \$700 and by April 15th \$500. In all cases, teachers must give at least 60 days' notice before resigning or retiring.

1.4 Teachers are equitably assigned across the district and within schools.

Finding: In the preview year of the new evaluation system, a greater proportion of teachers working in high-need schools²⁷ earned low ratings.

Pittsburgh recently implemented a new evaluation system that is described in more depth in Section 2. Here we explore whether a teacher's assignment correlates with his or her rating. It is important to note that these ratings were preview ratings in the 2013-2014 school year, and no decisions were tied to them.

In recent years, research has shown that the distribution of teachers could be a concern in school districts across the country, with lower-performing schools often experiencing greater difficulty

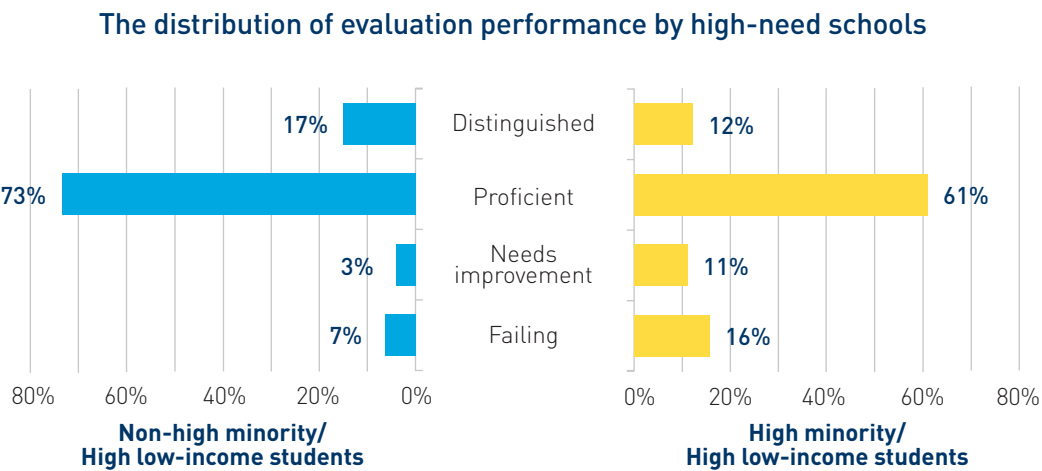
²⁶ PFT-PPS Teachers contract - Section D: Retirement Issues

²⁷ This section does not use the staffing support definition but rather the high minority/high low income definition. Schools in the top third percentage for either minority or free and reduced priced lunch are defined as high minority/high low income by the district.

in recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers than other schools in the same district.²⁸ All schools reap rewards from high-quality teaching; however, students in these high-need schools would benefit the most from a higher-quality teaching force.

An analysis of Pittsburgh’s teacher evaluation data shows that teachers who were rated failing, the lowest rating a teacher can receive, were disproportionately assigned to its highest-need schools (defined as high low income, high minority).²⁹

Of the 136 teachers who received preview ratings of failing in school year 2012-2013, almost half were employed in the 14 high-need schools. Conversely, only 20 percent of the 223 teachers rated distinguished were teaching in these same schools.



While most teachers in Pittsburgh are in the proficient category, more than one-quarter were rated needs improvement or failing in high-need schools, while only one-tenth received these ratings in non-high-need schools.

28 Loeb, S., Kalogrides, D., & Beteille, T. (2011). *Effective schools: Teacher hiring, assignment, development and retention*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. Lankford, H., Loeb, S., Wyckoff, J. (2002) *Teacher sorting and the plight of urban schools: A descriptive analysis*. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis 24: 37-62.

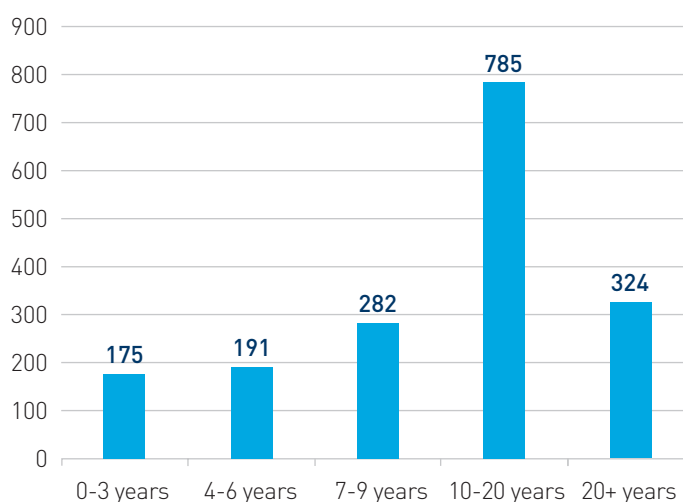
29 The ranking of schools with a high percentage of minority and low-income students is based on the percentage of students enrolled in the school who are either a minority or who have been identified as eligible for free or reduced lunch. The top one-third of schools as ordered by the defined criteria are defined as “High Percentage Minority & Low Income.” In 2012-2013 the top schools had enrollments of greater than 95 percent minority or low income.



Finding: While Pittsburgh has low turnover generally, teachers in high-need schools resign at a higher rate.³⁰

Overall, Pittsburgh's turnover rate is lower than other urban school districts NCTQ has studied. Teachers tend to stay in Pittsburgh, but they often transfer from school to school using the voluntary transfer process. And while teacher attrition is low in the district overall, particular schools seem to bear the brunt of the churn. A high number of teacher resignations in particular schools or communities within the district often indicates a challenging school culture. Studies have found that contextual factors such as lack of administrative support, poor staff relationships in terms of collaboration and collegiality and challenges with student behaviors correlate highly with teacher turnover.³¹ Other research has shown that most schools make little effort to keep high-performing teachers.³²

Number of teachers by years of seniority



The graph shows that the majority of Pittsburgh Public Schools teachers have 10 to 20 years of seniority in the district, providing evidence of relatively low turnover. Nationally, the modal years of experience for teachers is only five years and recently was as low as a single year.³³

In focus groups, NCTQ heard that retention was not a critical issue for schools in Pittsburgh, and the resignation data supports this sentiment. Overall, teacher resignations are low at an average of 4 percent annually across the district. However, there are still variations: data from 2012-2013

30 High-need schools in this section are defined as those that are high minority, high low income.

31 Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Ing, M., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., Wyckoff, J. (October 2010) *The Influence of School Administrators on Teacher Retention Decisions*. CALDER: The Urban Institute.

32 *The Irreplaceables: Understanding the Real Retention Crisis in America's Urban Schools* (July 2012). TNTP. <http://tntp.org/ideas-and-innovations/view/the-irreplaceables-understanding-the-real-retention-crisis>

33 Ingersoll, R., & Merrill, L. (April 2014). *Seven trends: The Transformation of the Teaching Force*. Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

show that the percentage of teacher resignations at high minority, high low-income schools is twice that of teachers at other schools.

Finding: Pittsburgh high school classes have distinctive tracks, and teacher class assignments are done by seniority.

High school students in Pittsburgh are placed in two tracks—Pittsburgh Scholars Program (PSP) or Centers for Advanced Study (CAS), the latter being an application-only process and meant for “gifted” students. Prior to 2013, there was a third track, “mainstream”, which was collapsed into the Pittsburgh Scholars Program. Students participating in a focus group were quick to point out that they saw differences in the quality of their teachers across the different tracks. When asked if teachers teach only in one track, they responded that even when the same teacher taught classes from each strand, there were different expectations for students.

In early 2013, researchers Demetra Kalogrides, Susanna Loeb and Tara Beteille released a report that used data from Miami-Dade County Public Schools to understand within-school sorting of teachers.³⁴ They found that teachers with certain characteristics (less experience and attended less-competitive colleges) were more likely to work with lower-achieving students than were other teachers in the same school.³⁵ This research suggested that there are dynamics at play within schools, where more senior teachers have more choice over which classes they teach. The Pittsburgh teachers’ contract mandates that teacher assignments within schools must be done by seniority, and principals confirmed that they generally adhere to these contract provisions.³⁶

Standard 1 Recommendations



- 1. Eliminate the eligibility list.** The eligibility list, while attempting to focus hiring on the most qualified candidates, hinders flexibility for both the district and schools. The criteria used for placement on the list can result in high-quality teachers being screened out of the process. In addition, the list makes it difficult for principals to recruit on their own, as they are bound to hire teachers who are on the eligibility list whether or not those teachers have an interest in a school with a vacancy. The eligibility list adds another step to a long hiring process and puts Pittsburgh (and Philadelphia—the only other Pennsylvania district required to use an eligibility list) at a disadvantage, since teachers applying for jobs in neighboring districts do not have to jump through these hoops.

34 Kalogrides, D., Loeb, S., & Beteille, T. (2013). Systematic sorting: Teacher characteristics and class assignments. *Sociology of Education*. Volume 86, Pages 103-123.

35 Ibid.

36 Side letter between PPS and PFT, May 1999. Teacher Scheduling and Schedule Preferences under Article 52.



This recommendation requires only a change in practice.





This recommendation requires a formal negotiation between the district and the teachers’ union.





This recommendation requires a change in state law.





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2. Incorporate teacher interviews as part of the district screening process. Even if eligibility lists are eliminated, it is helpful to have a district-level screening process that provides principals with a good pool of candidates from which to choose. However, this process should include an in-person (which could be done in groups), Skype or phone interview to provide more information for principals hoping to fill positions. Application forms can only provide one aspect of a teacher's ability to be successful in the classroom, and it can be complemented by live interactions.
- 

3. Continue early offers of employment to get teachers into staffing support schools. The district's initiation of early offers to help staffing-support schools is an excellent first step. This component should be formalized into the hiring timeline so that it becomes an annual process. Further analysis of the matriculation rate of these candidates into positions and their effectiveness relative to other new hires will provide hard data to assess the validity of this approach.
- 

4. Go beyond state lines for recruiting purposes. While the district has many teacher preparation programs nearby that may provide high-quality candidates, there are highly rated programs within driving distance. Considering these options in addition to local institutions is a helpful step toward improving the quality of candidates hired and can help improve satisfaction with new teachers as well as retention rates.
- 

5. Collect data by institution and teacher preparation program, including teacher performance. The district has already noted that it will begin to collect and analyze data on teachers from the higher education institution they attended. This should include the specific teacher preparation program attended since programs within the same institution often vary. After data is collected, a report-card-style tool comparing programs based on criteria that are important to the district can help both the district and the programs recognize areas of improvement and opportunities for growth.
- 

6. Eliminate all forced placements. While the district has tried to minimize the effect of forced placements on schools, the fact of the matter is that all teachers are currently placed in a new school if they have been displaced. If the new school is not a good fit for the teacher or vice versa, this can be detrimental to the school environment and the teacher.
- 

7. Hire teachers earlier. Early hiring can be accomplished, at least in part, by improving the retirement notification incentive and better projecting resignations. Condensing the multiple rounds of internal hiring so that it doesn't span two months can help move the timeline up and allow principals to interview and hire new candidates before the end of the school year.



This recommendation requires only a change in practice.



This recommendation requires a formal negotiation between the district and the teachers' union.



This recommendation requires a change in state law.



8. Develop a different job description for teaching in high-minority, high low-income schools.

Create a separate job description with additional compensation for a career ladder position for vacancies in high-need schools. Given the additional resources, time and expertise required to effectively teach in high-need schools, recruiting for these positions should target experienced teachers that have shown effectiveness in the classroom. While these teachers would work collaboratively with their colleagues, unlike the career ladder roles, the focus of this position would be to work effectively with students rather than with adults.

Boston Public Schools applied a cohort approach to working with low-performing schools, starting in 2009. In this model, Turnaround Teacher Teams (T3), 25 percent of the faculty is comprised of teacher leaders who have responsibility for instructional leadership (in exchange for higher pay and extensive training). Teachers apply centrally to participate in a cohort through Teach Plus, a nonprofit focused on teacher leadership, and then the cohorts are deployed to high-need schools across the city. In most cases, T3 schools started with lower levels of achievement than other turnaround schools and have been able to surpass their turnaround peers.



9. Monitor teacher churn in high-need schools to reduce transfers of effective teachers out of these schools. The Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers and the district have agreed to eliminate the requirement for teachers placed after August 1 to reapply for their positions in high-need schools if the principal and teacher agree that it is a good fit. That is a good start to reducing transfers out of high-need schools. Because of school closures and changes in school configurations in recent years, it is difficult to detect transfer patterns. The Human Resources department is now keeping data on teachers that transfer in and out of each school. This data should be monitored to identify problems that may need to be addressed or to spot outstanding schools that can be tapped for their best practices in retaining teachers.



This recommendation requires only a change in practice.



This recommendation requires a formal negotiation between the district and the teachers' union.



This recommendation requires a change in state law.



Standard 2.

Evaluation

In recent years, Pittsburgh has made dramatic changes to its evaluation system as part of its Empowering Effective Teachers plan. Funded by large grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education's Teacher Incentive Fund, the plan's first goal was to define good teaching. In 2008-2009, the district began to develop a new observation rubric called RISE, which stands for Research-Based Inclusive System of Evaluation. This rubric, a variation of the Charlotte Danielson framework, was piloted district-wide in 2010-2011. The shift to the RISE classroom observation instrument was a significant departure from the previous model, which consisted of a single classroom observation resulting in a satisfactory or unsatisfactory rating for the teacher. Instead, the new instrument focuses on professional growth, which means it is based on multiple observations and a formal review of a teacher's performance at three distinct points in the school year: beginning-of-year, mid-year and end-of-year.³⁷

After implementing the new observation rubric, the district added additional measures to a teacher's evaluation. In partnership with Mathematica Policy Research, they created a value-added measure to track student growth from year to year, implemented student surveys and developed a building-level measure of student growth.

At the same time, the state of Pennsylvania adopted a new evaluation framework that also included multiple measures. The state's framework is comprised of teacher observations, student-outcome data and building-level data. Pittsburgh, further along in their process by the time the state framework was finalized, requested and was granted a one-year reprieve in the form of a waiver that allows them to use their own model for the 2013-2014 school year. Now that the school year is almost over, it is unclear what the state will permit.

At the end of the 2012-2013 school year, the district gave teachers informational "preview" reports showing what their evaluation rating would have been if the new evaluation system had been fully in place. Teachers were able to see the summative ratings they would have received and each of the measures that goes into the ratings. In the 2013-2014 school year, the new evaluation system was fully implemented, with rewards and consequences directly attached to teachers' summative ratings.

³⁷ In the beginning of the year, a teacher completes a self-assessment form, and the administrator reviews and signs off on it. Then, the teacher completes the mid-year component of the self-assessment, and the administrator signs off on that. Finally, the teacher completes the end-of-year portion of the self-assessment. The administrator assesses the teacher on all 24 RISE components and completes the official annual rating form (A-2) based on the 15 power components.

2.1 Districts have an evaluation model that includes multiple measures of performance, including objective evidence of student learning for all teachers, as well as for those in nontested grades and subjects.

Finding: Pittsburgh's evaluation framework includes multiple measures of performance.

Pittsburgh's evaluation system is comprised of four main components, forming a combined measure of a teacher's performance:

1. The district's classroom observation system known as RISE.
2. Student-growth data based either on a teacher's value-added score or on whether he or she has met individual student learning objectives (SLOs), depending on available data for the teacher.³⁸

Value-added models estimate the contributions made by individual teachers to the achievement growth of their students based on students' improvement on standardized tests. When teachers do not have value-added data because they teach in nontested grades and subjects, school districts often ask them, sometimes working with their principals, to define their student learning objectives for the year. Formation of such objectives requires identifying or creating assessments for measurement, accounting for student starting points and setting a student learning goal.

3. Student surveys: Input from students in grades K-12 on an individual teacher's performance. These surveys ask objective questions that have been proven to correlate with teacher effectiveness.³⁹
4. Building-level growth data: The overall student performance for the school in which the teacher works.⁴⁰

38 In the preview rating year, teachers without value-added scores were rated on a component of the RISE rubric (3f); however, the district is transitioning to Student Learning Objectives for the 2014-2015 school year. The 3f is a rubric-based measure of student growth and a precursor to SLOs.

39 National Education Policy Center. (2010, December). Learning about teaching: Initial findings from the Measures of Effective Teaching Project. MET Project Policy Brief. Boulder, CO.

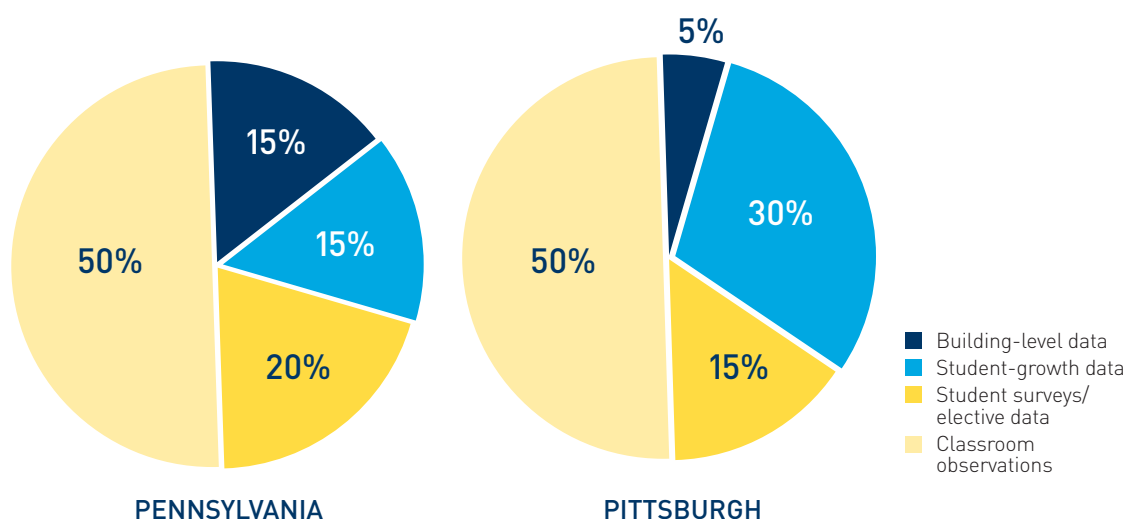
40 Building-level data for Pittsburgh includes student test scores and nonassessment measures such as the passage rate in core courses, attendance, and the school's holding power (a school's ability to keep a student in school the next year).



Pittsburgh's model differs from the state model in three important ways:

- Reliance on building-level data is reduced from 15 percent at the state level to 5 percent in Pittsburgh.⁴¹
- The percentage of teacher-level student-growth data (value-added measures) increases from 15 percent at the state level to 30 percent in Pittsburgh.
- Instead of the state's elective data measure, ambiguously defined as locally developed measures selected by the district on an annual basis, Pittsburgh uses student surveys.⁴²

Pennsylvania and Pittsburgh's evaluation model



Pittsburgh's evaluation model places less weight on building-level data and greater weight on student-growth data. It also utilizes student survey data while Pennsylvania's system does not.

The state's model places considerable weight on building-level data (15 percent), which individual teachers may not be able to affect. Pittsburgh takes a more sensible approach, putting more weight (30 percent) on data that individual teachers are more likely to affect. The district's use of student surveys, which has been known to correlate highly with teacher outcomes, provides an additional objective lens into an individual teacher's performance.

41 The state of Pennsylvania defines building-level data as including, but not limited to, factors such as the school's overall student performance on state value-added assessments; the school's graduation and promotion rates; student attendance; student participation in Advanced Placement courses; and student performance on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT).

42 The 20 percent of Pennsylvania's model defined as elective data is comprised of locally developed measures selected by the district from an annual list created by the state, including, but not limited to, district-designed tests, nationally recognized standardized tests, industry certification exams, student projects and student portfolios.

I should be able to understand the math that is involved in my VAM for my overall rating. Please don't tell me that it is so complicated that I wouldn't understand. The rating should be transparent.

– Pittsburgh teacher

Finding: The design and roll out of the classroom observation instrument, RISE, has resulted in a tool that is well understood across the district.

Pittsburgh's observation model, RISE, has helped principals and teachers determine teacher performance across a total of 24 components. In the 2013-2014 school year, the district decided on 15 "power" components that fed into the required summative rating, as 24 components is a lot on which to base any classroom observation. The components fall into one of four domains:

- Planning and Preparation
- Classroom Environment
- Professional Responsibilities
- Teaching and Learning

In designing RISE, the district worked extensively with the teachers union and principals as well as individual teachers across many Pittsburgh schools. By all accounts, the district implemented a lengthy, thoughtful and collaborative process, a rarity across the many school districts NCTQ studies. The design process of RISE has been lauded nationally as a model for other districts to follow, particularly the district and union's ability to collaborate and incorporate teachers' input. Implementation took place over a two-year period, with 24 schools piloting the system in 2009-2010 and all schools using it in 2010-2011. To increase the likelihood of a smooth implementation, the district initiated a staggered rollout to schools.

Individual teacher value-added measure

Teachers do not appear to have the same acceptance of the value-added measure as they do for the RISE observation rubric. The use of value-added models has been a common challenge for school districts across the country for many reasons, some of which are listed below:

- Value-added measurement is a relatively new concept in evaluations. It is new.
- Scores are based on how students perform one week out of the year, and there may have been factors that influenced student performance (e.g., the room was too hot, many of the students were ill).



- There is a general perception that the state's English Language Arts tests in particular are sub par and/or bear little relationship to the curriculum.
- It is based on a complex mathematical formula that may not be easy to understand.
- Using the results, it is difficult for a teacher to know what to do to improve future scores.
- Not all teachers in a school are eligible to receive a value-added score, therefore making teachers feel a level of inequity on how they are judged within their own school.

In Pittsburgh, these challenges are further complicated by the state's having devised a value-added model that differs from the district's model. The confusion and mistrust about how the value-added measure is determined is exacerbated when a teacher receives two (sometimes conflicting) value-added scores.

While both the state model (Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System, or PVAAS) and the model used in Pittsburgh control for student-level characteristics such as how well a student performed on a prior state test, Pittsburgh's model includes additional controls for a student's background such as free and reduced-price lunch eligibility, English language learner status, participation in gifted courses, and learning disabilities, to name just a few. (For the entire list of Pittsburgh control variables, see Appendix C).

In addition, Pittsburgh uses a combination of state and local tests, while the state uses only the state test to calculate the value-added measure.⁴³

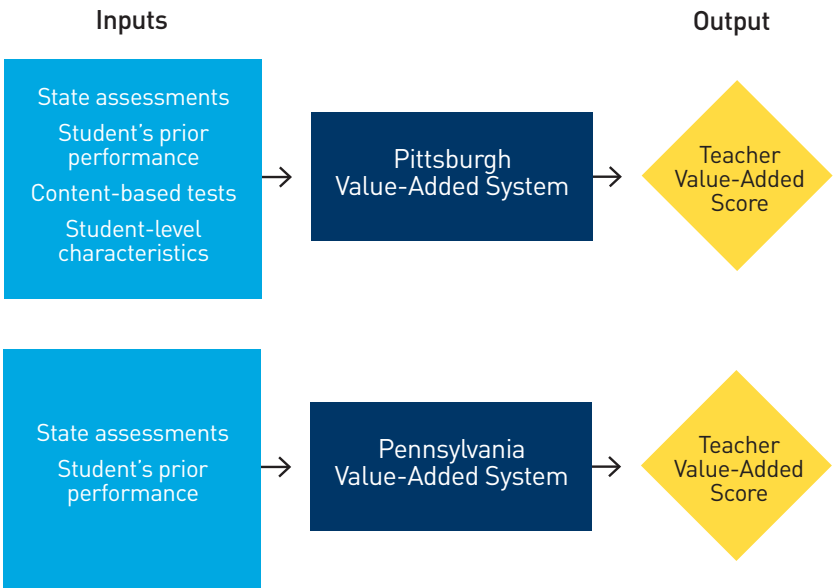
Because these two systems consider different factors, it is not surprising that they have different results. According to research, both models control for the most important factor (prior student performance), and controlling for additional factors is not likely to significantly alter results; however, small variations in results, as well as different classifications of teachers in each model, feed teachers' mistrust.⁴⁴ In focus groups, participants voiced a sense of unfairness, particularly if they felt that the state model might result in a higher individual or school-level value-added score for them.⁴⁵

43 Mathematica technical report

44 Goldhaber, D., & Theobald, R. (2013, November). Center for Education Data & Research. Do different value-added models tell us the same things? http://www.carnegieknowledgegenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/CKN_2012-10_Goldhaber_Nov2013-Update.pdf, retrieved March, 2014.

45 The results of the state's individual teacher value-added scores will be provided beginning in the 2015-2016 school year.

How are Pennsylvania and Pittsburgh’s Value-Added Measures determined?



In many districts around the country, teachers are struggling to understand how the inputs that go into a value-added measure result in a certain output. In Pittsburgh, this is further complicated because the state and district use different models, and teachers could end up with two different value-added scores.

The district defends its more complex model, stating that it chose to compromise some of the transparency in an effort to have a model that is a fairer representation of a teacher’s actual performance. However, regardless of the tension between transparency and fairness, the effort to continually educate teachers on how their ratings are determined is paramount. Training that includes explanations on how or why value-added scores can differ between the state model and the district will be important for both teachers and principals.

Finding: Commendably, Pittsburgh has implemented student surveys as a component of their evaluation system.

A teacher’s job is incredibly challenging and complex. It is comprised of multiple components that cannot be measured just by student test scores—for example, supporting students in their socio-emotional development, helping them build study skills and teaching them how to work in a team. Student surveys allow teachers to be recognized for all the ways they benefit a student’s overall academic success. Carefully crafted student surveys have been found to correlate strongly with overall student achievement. An individual student generally observes a teacher more than 1,000 hours a year. Multiply that student times a class of 30, and it is easy to see why 30,000 hours of observation are likely to be a fair representation of teacher performance. Survey designers



have ensured validity of content by developing research-based questions and structuring surveys around standards related to effective teacher characteristics.⁴⁶

Pittsburgh began using student surveys district-wide in the 2011-2012 school year. Similar to many other districts that have implemented surveys, the district uses the TRIPOD survey, which was designed, developed and piloted over a 10-year period by Cambridge Education.

While, overall, the use of student surveys is a practice well supported by research, NCTQ did hear some criticisms of Pittsburgh's implementation, which are valid issues to address.⁴⁷

Student Survey Fatigue

In both principal and student focus groups, concerns were raised about student survey fatigue. Some students noted that they were "over-surveyed" and that they no longer took the process seriously. They mentioned the amount of class time that the surveys take. Students also noted that they have to fill out the same general demographic information about themselves for each survey, which gets understandably tiresome, but because the survey is designed to be done anonymously, this information is not prepopulated by the school or the district.

Consistency

Principals voiced concerns about the consistency of survey administration. While by design, teachers are out of the classroom when students are filling out survey responses to ensure that there is no bias, in reality teachers were often present. Students were completing the survey in front of the teacher they were writing about because it is costly and logistically challenging to identify a proctor for each classroom. These are concerns that have been difficult for the district to resolve, given the sheer number of surveys that must be implemented annually.

2.2 All teachers receive an annual evaluation rating.

Finding: All Pittsburgh teachers receive an annual rating. Nontenured teachers receive a more intensive review, with six evaluation ratings in a three-year period.

Pittsburgh's evaluation process results in teachers receiving one of four performance levels: distinguished, proficient, needs improvement or failing. All tenured teachers in Pittsburgh receive an annual summative rating that falls into one of these categories. The fact that nontenured teachers are rated twice a year is likely to be beneficial to new teachers' need for more frequent feedback.

46 Balch, R. (2012). The validation of a student survey on teacher practice. (Vanderbilt University, p. 7). Retrieved March, 2014, from <http://mystudentsurvey.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Balch-Student-Surveys-2012.pdf>

47 Principal and student focus groups

Finding: Only two of the six summative ratings for nontenured teachers are based on multiple measures.

Nontenured teachers

While nontenured teachers receive six ratings on their performance in their first three years, the composition of the rating differs based on the semester.⁴⁸ The frequency of ratings in a teacher's early years provides needed feedback as teachers are developing as practitioners. Throughout these three years, the principal's observation of the teacher is always a part of the process.

Semester	Composition of Rating
Semester 1	Principal observation only
Semester 2	Principal observation only
Semester 3	Principal observation only
Semester 4	Combined measures (value-added scores, student surveys and principal observation)
Semester 5	Principal observation only
Semester 6	Combined measures (value-added scores, student surveys and principal observation)

Even though some ratings are based only on principal observations, the district considers each of the six ratings "summative," implying that multiple measures are being used at each decision point. In their first three semesters, teachers receive a rating based on the RISE observation instrument only, both because value-added measures do not yet exist for this group and to give them a chance to learn from their early feedback without becoming overwhelmed. While teachers who do not have value-added measures are evaluated on progress toward student goals, this student progress is not factored into evaluations during the mid-year period.⁴⁹

Student survey results are not used except in semesters four and six, although the district notes that teachers do see their survey results to be used to inform their practice. Ostensibly, the district could include student survey outcomes earlier in the evaluation process (at least by semester two) and move forward on Student Learning Objectives for all novice teachers without value-added scores. This would give a more accurate picture of their performance and allow them to be better prepared for the full evaluation system that they will be using for the rest of their careers in Pittsburgh Public Schools.

The district stated that one of the main reasons for this distinction is because these teachers are still on the "upswing of their learning curve" and judging them by the same combined measure would inadvertently compare them to their more experienced colleagues. However, these additional

⁴⁸ 2013-14 RISE Business Rules

⁴⁹ Currently, teachers with no value-added scores are evaluated on a component of the RISE rubric, standard 3F, but the district has confirmed that this will be replaced by Student Learning Objectives in the 2014-2015 school year.



measurements would likely benefit this group equally, if not more so, than their more experienced peers. While the response to scores on metrics may be different, the difference should not be in the metrics themselves since the desired result is the same.

Final employment decisions flowing from summative ratings are discussed in section 3.4.

2.3 The observers provide regular feedback to teachers on their classroom instruction, aimed at improving their instructional practice.

In Pittsburgh, school administrators and a certain category of teacher are considered qualified to conduct formal observations of teachers. These teachers are Instructional Teacher Leaders 2 (ITL2), a new type of teacher described in more detail in Section 3.3. These teachers have both coaching and observational roles, which can be a delicate mix of duties. Even in cases where an ITL2 has been the observer, the school principal always gives the teacher's official evaluation rating, taking into account the observational evidence provided by the ITL2 teachers.

Finding: Depending on the individual school, up to half of all teachers are not required to be observed annually.

Under Pittsburgh's evaluation system, teachers with at least a proficient rating can be evaluated in one of two ways: a formal observation process or a supported growth process.

Formal observation process

Teachers undergoing a formal observation process are observed by the principal or an ITL2 teacher one to four times during the academic year, depending on the teacher's level of experience. All nontenured teachers, as well as a subset of tenured teachers, go through the formal process. At the end of the year, teachers going through the formal process receive a final end-of-year observation rating based on the data that has been collected throughout the year.

Supported growth

The remaining teachers are observed based on a supported growth process, essentially a deep dive into one of the 24 components of the classroom observation rubric. The component is selected by the teacher. To be in the supported growth project group, teachers must have been rated proficient or distinguished in the prior year.

A teacher in a supported growth year is not required to receive a formal observation. Instead the teacher works with a team of peers who monitor progress and provide him or her with a rating at the end of the year on the selected component of focus. According to the district, this allows teachers to get peer feedback and also gives school leaders more time to work with novice teachers or teachers who need more support. The teacher's final score on the evaluation instrument is based on the prior year's scores as well as the one component they studied in depth in the current year.

The number of teachers eligible for the supported growth project is based on the number of school observers available. Up to one-third to one-half of the teachers are to be placed on the supported growth pathway, depending on whether the principal has additional help in observing teachers from an ITL2 teacher. (Not all schools have ITL2 teachers.)⁵⁰ Teachers are not allowed to conduct supported growth projects for more than two years in a row.

Intensive support

Starting in the 2014-2015 school year, teachers will be required to go on an intensive support plan if they have a rating of failing or needs improvement. This plan provides additional resources to low-rated teachers based on their areas of weakness identified through the RISE evaluation instrument. It also inserts more observers into the process, as two central office staff members are also required to complete an observation of teachers in this group.

Number of observations required by rating and process

	Failing	Needs improvement	Proficient	Distinguished
Formal process (nontenured)	Dismissed from the district	Placed on intensive support plan 4 formal observations 15 opportunities for feedback	2 formal observations 5-7 opportunities for feedback	
Formal process (tenured)	Placed on intensive support plan 2 formal observations 15 opportunities for feedback		1 formal observation 5-7 opportunities for feedback	
Supported growth project (for tenured teachers only)			No formal observation – works with peers on a single focus area of teacher's choosing	

Teachers can either be observed in the formal process or in the supported growth project. Based on which track they are on and their evaluation rating, the number of observations and opportunities for feedback differ.

Finding: The district provides teachers with few differentiated supports depending on their evaluation rating.

While many districts under new evaluation models have created systems where teachers with higher ratings get fewer observations, this waiver should be reserved for the most highly rated teachers, which in Pittsburgh's case is the very highest of the teachers in the proficient category and those rated distinguished. Under the current system, all teachers rated proficient or distinguished are treated the same; for example, both are able to request placement on the supported growth project and not have a formal observation.

50 2013-2014 RISE business rules



Teachers can volunteer to participate in supported growth, or they can be selected by a lottery system in the event that additional teachers are needed. Ostensibly, this is to reduce the number of observations a principal needs to conduct in a year. However, the process by which teachers are placed in this group is concerning. Within the proficient rating category there is likely to be a wide range of teacher performance (also likely true in the distinguished category but to a lesser extent). All of these teachers would benefit from observations by their administrator in a particular year, but presumably some more than others. The somewhat arbitrary identification of teachers to participate in supported growth seems to diminish the import of the evaluation process as a critical tool for focusing on the improvement of individual teachers.

The lack of differentiation is no better at the other end of the spectrum. With the notable exception of the state-determined steps to dismissal, there are no differences between tenured teachers who are rated as needs improvement and those rated failing. In Pittsburgh, both ratings lead to the same intensive support plan, receiving similar numbers of observations and touch points.

Finding: Administrators are spending the most time with teachers who require the most support: novice and struggling teachers.

Pittsburgh tries to ensure that school principals work with the teachers most likely to need additional support. Administrators are required to observe novice teachers as well as teachers who are rated as failing or needs improvement.

Administrators are not required to observe teachers who have been rated previously as proficient or distinguished. Having an ITL2 teacher provide support to teachers who are rated highly does free up the administrator's time to focus on teachers who need the additional support, a reasonable compromise to increase the likelihood that administrators will have time to support new and/or struggling teachers. However, the district should survey schools to determine if all teachers are getting the feedback they need to improve, regardless of the size of the school and the number of new teachers and administrators.

2.4 Ratings discern substantial performance differences among teachers.

Finding: Pittsburgh's performance ranges allow for more differentiation of teacher performance compared to Pennsylvania's performance ranges.⁵¹

As previously noted, teachers in Pittsburgh can receive one of four summative ratings based on how they score on each of the multiple measures in numeric terms. These ratings are distinguished, proficient, needs improvement and failing. This is aligned with Pennsylvania state law, which requires moving from the binary system of two ratings (satisfactory and unsatisfactory) to four different rating levels.

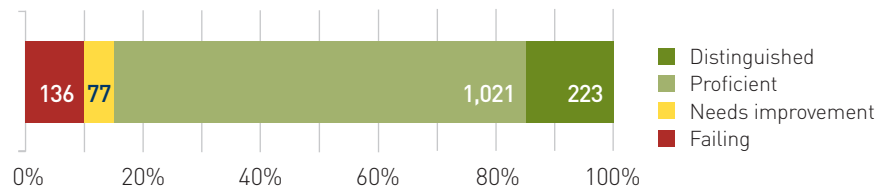
⁵¹ Performance ranges are based on the combined scores that teachers receive on the components comprising the summative evaluation rating.

These different categories only hold value, however, if the numeric-performance ranges allow for a fairly normal distribution of teachers across all four rating levels. If the range is too large, then almost all teachers will fall into one category. If the range is too small, then very few teachers will end up in a specific category.

The preview education evaluator ratings released in August 2013 highlight a well-distributed teacher pool, except for the small portion of teachers who received a rating of needs improvement (5 percent), largely due to the narrow performance range defined as needs improvement. Most teachers in Pittsburgh fell into the proficient category, which is to be expected, but the district also identified approximately 15 percent of teachers who achieved a distinguished preview rating and 14 percent who were in the needs improvement or failing categories.

It is important to note that the district does not use quotas: There is no required percentage of teachers who should be categorized in any of the four rating categories. That said, if all teachers were rated as distinguished or, conversely, failing, this would raise concerns about the suitability of the evaluation system to represent the range of general performance. In teaching, as in other fields, this range almost always includes very high and very low performers, with the largest part of the workforce somewhere in the middle. Using the current performance ranges, the proficient category represents a wide range of performance, from those who barely missed the cutoff for the distinguished range to those who only received half of the available points (150 out of an available 300 points) in their evaluation. Combined with the narrow range for the needs improvement rating, this likely means that there are a number of teachers who scored in the bottom portion of the proficient range who would benefit from the same additional supports provided to teachers in the needs improvement category.

Teacher summative ratings on preview educator effectiveness reports



Fifteen percent of teachers in Pittsburgh received a distinguished rating on the preview educator evaluator results. The majority of teachers were rated proficient.

The state's performance ranges

The state's distinct evaluation system has its own performance ranges, which differ significantly from those in Pittsburgh. The state's performance ranges presume that failing teachers receive very few points (if any) for their evaluation, requiring only one-sixth of the available points—the equivalent of putting your name on your paper—to receive a needs improvement rating. Given



the need to correctly identify failing teachers quickly to initiate support or dismissal, the state's bands provide less distinction between teacher performance levels and even less opportunity to differentiate support than Pittsburgh's ranges.

**A comparison of two evaluation systems:
Pittsburgh versus Pennsylvania's performance ranges**

	Pittsburgh	Pennsylvania ⁵²
Distinguished	210-300	250-300
Proficient	150-209	150-249
Needs improvement	140-149	50-149
Failing	0-139	0-49

While Pittsburgh and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania both sort teachers into four performance categories, Pennsylvania creates much smaller groups of both distinguished and failing teachers, pushing most teachers into the middle two groups.

If Pittsburgh had used the Pennsylvania system to rate its teachers, only 2 percent would have received a distinguished rating as opposed to the 15 percent that were classified that way under the Pittsburgh rubric. Three percent of teachers would have been in the failing category, whereas under the Pittsburgh system, 9 percent were in that category.⁵³

2.5 The district supports the evaluation process by tracking and using evaluation data to drive decisions such as professional development offerings.

Finding: In the pilot phases of the evaluation system, data has not been actively used to determine professional development offerings at the district level; however, the district has indicated that they plan to do this going forward.

Pittsburgh has a vast amount of data on evaluation outcomes, sorted in many different ways. This includes assessing overall evaluation results by years of experience, school location and type of school (e.g., grade level, poverty level). The district is also thoughtful about specific components of the evaluation process. For example, conversations with district staff about the student survey highlighted their desire to look at the data through multiple lenses to make sure it remains meaningful.

⁵² Pennsylvania's cut-scores are on a 0-3 basis and have been scaled to compare directly to Pittsburgh.

⁵³ The 3 percent of teachers rated as failing were all participating in Employee Improvement Plans, the structure for improvement plans under the former evaluation system, and received zero points for the observation half of their evaluation score. This would be the equivalent of receiving all unsatisfactory ratings on the evaluation, a scenario that has never happened and is unlikely. Since this process is no longer in place, it is likely that no teachers would actually perform at the failing level when using the state performance ranges.

The district made a deliberate decision not to link data from the evaluation to rewards or consequences, including professional development, before full implementation. While the data is available in the aggregate, it has not yet been used to inform district-level professional development. The district is in the process of moving to BloomBoard, an online system that will allow administrators to track individual teachers' classroom observation results. This tool will also allow teachers to link to professional development offerings that are specific to their areas of need at both the school and the district levels.

Finding: The district appropriately uses evaluation data for hiring teachers into career ladder positions.

The district has developed four career ladder positions, which are opportunities to reward high-performing teachers with additional responsibilities and higher pay. Some of these positions allow teachers to work part time, while others take teachers out of the classroom completely. Details on these career ladder positions are discussed in Section 3.3.

Teachers' performance is factored into the selection process for these positions. Specific components included as a part of the hiring process are:

1. Student learning and growth
2. Teaching practice, as measured by the principal observation rubric⁵⁴
3. Building and maintaining effective relationships
4. Professionalism

Conversations with district staff confirmed that teachers who sought to be an ITL2 teacher did go through an application process that included looking at their value-added scores and student survey data. Data on the selection rate indicates that it was modestly competitive, with four out of every 10 candidates offered a position.

Standard 2 Recommendations



- 1. Continue allowing Pittsburgh to use its evaluation framework as designed.** Pennsylvania granted Pittsburgh a one-year waiver for its evaluation model, and the state will have to decide whether to extend this waiver. Given its emphasis on objective measures of teacher performance, as well as its incorporation of other well-researched measures such as student surveys, Pittsburgh should be able to continue to use their evaluation model rather than having to convert to the state framework.

54 The District's teacher evaluation tool at the time



This recommendation requires only a change in practice.





This recommendation requires a formal negotiation between the district and the teachers' union.





This recommendation requires a change in state law.





- 

2. Provide additional training to teachers on the district's value-added model. Ongoing training on how Pittsburgh's value-added measure was derived, how it is calculated and how/why it differs from the state's model would be beneficial to new and veteran teachers and principals alike.
- 

3. The district should provide more differentiated supports for teachers depending on how they are rated. The number of formal and informal observations should be directly correlated to a teacher's evaluation rating, but currently teachers in the top two categories and the bottom two categories are treated the same. In addition to the flexibility to participate in a supported growth project or a requirement to create an intensive support plan, the four ratings should lead to varying opportunities for professional development.
- 

4. Revise the protocols for determining which teachers participate in a supported growth rather than in the formal evaluation process. Having a predetermined portion of teachers required to be placed in the supported growth project in schools reduces the opportunity for principals to individualize support based on their teachers' needs. In addition, using a lottery process to fill spots in the supported growth group further undermines the importance of the observation rubric as a growth tool for all teachers in the district.
- 

5. Give principals and ITL2 teachers more flexibility in determining whom they are charged with observing. While the principal should remain responsible for nontenured teachers' evaluations, principals and ITL2 teachers should both have the flexibility to provide support to new teachers, if they determine that it is appropriate.
- 

6. Broaden the needs improvement performance range. Increasing the range of needs improvement will help to clearly identify teachers who need to improve as separate from those who are proficient in their craft. Pittsburgh's performance ranges allow for better differentiation of teacher performance than the state's ranges; however, the needs improvement range is particularly small, which pushes teachers who receive only half the available points into the proficient category. Broadening this category is likely to identify teachers now at the low end of the proficient category who need additional support to thrive in the classroom.
- 

7. Incorporate multiple measures in nontenured teachers' evaluation ratings more frequently. While it is understandable that nontenured teachers do not have value-added data in their first or second year, student learning objectives and student surveys can be used in evaluations more frequently than they are now. The sooner these teachers are acclimated to the multiple measures, the better able they will be to improve.



This recommendation requires only a change in practice.



This recommendation requires a formal negotiation between the district and the teachers' union.



This recommendation requires a change in state law.



Standard 3.

Talent Management

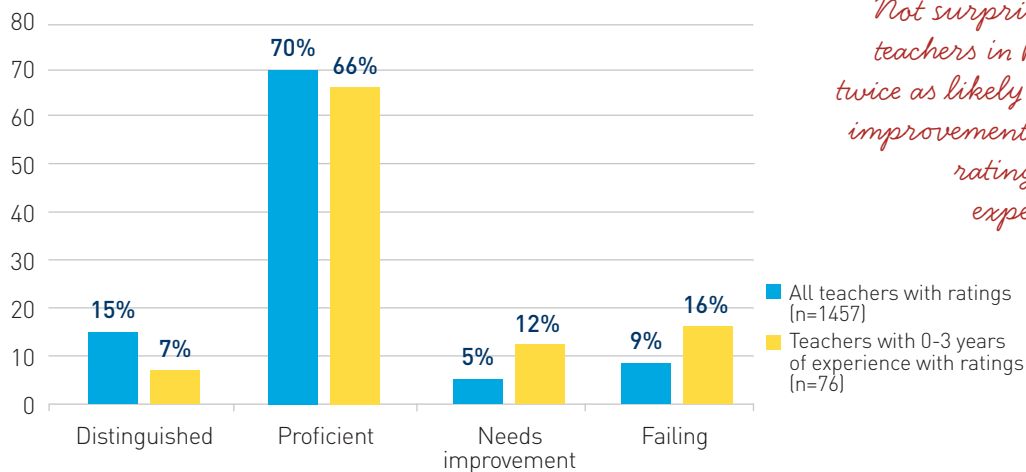
3.1 Novice teachers receive regular and consistent support from experienced teachers or mentors.

Finding: Evaluation outcomes in Pittsburgh illustrate that novice teachers would benefit from strong induction and mentoring.

A new-teacher induction program that includes mentoring and professional development for novice teachers provides an often much-needed helping hand during their first years on the job. For this reason, many districts have initiated new-teacher support programs; in fact, over half of the districts in NCTQ's Teacher Contract Database have a new-teacher mentorship program.

Predictably, Pittsburgh's 2012-2013 summary preview evaluation ratings highlight performance differences between more experienced and novice teachers, with a higher percentage of novice teachers in the failing and needs improvement categories. While lower ratings are partly to be expected for teachers who are new to the job, especially given the weak preservice preparation most teachers receive, this data indicates that additional supports for these teachers could be of real value.

Summary preview teacher evaluation ratings by seniority



Not surprisingly, novice teachers in Pittsburgh are twice as likely to get a "needs improvement" or "failing" rating as their more experienced peers.

Largely due to weak preservice preparation across the nation, schools have come to expect that a sizeable number of new teachers will struggle, a problem manifested by the frequently lower test scores in classrooms taught by first-year teachers. School districts have no choice but to compensate for poor preparation with improved on-site support.

Finding: Although Pittsburgh has designed a thoughtful plan around new-teacher induction, in reality, novice teachers are not getting regular support.

In every district NCTQ has studied, there is a large gap between a district's intentions to support new teachers and its execution of that support. Pittsburgh is no exception. Its new-teacher induction program is detailed for first-year teachers, but its execution seems to be uneven across schools. As expected, supports for teachers in their second and third years are reduced dramatically.

The Design

The district reports that there are four components to their support of first-year teachers:

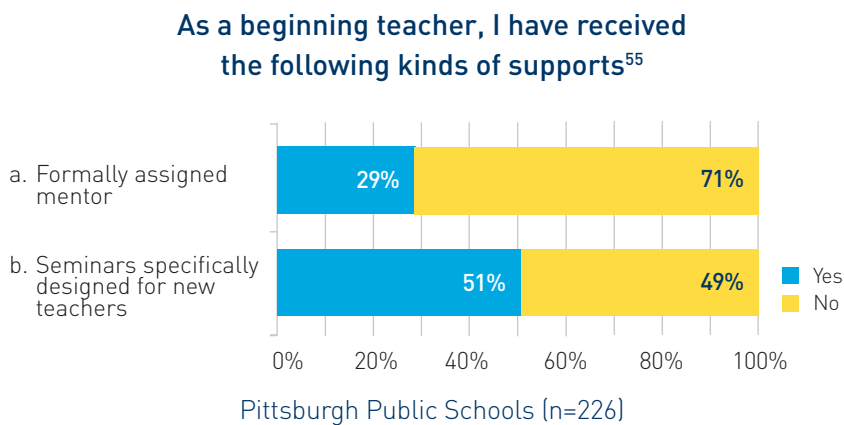
- Orientation meetings: six sessions provided by central office staff designed to introduce teachers to different aspects of being a teacher in Pittsburgh. Examples of topics covered are RISE (the teacher performance observation rubric), human resources policies and procedures and information technology resources;
- Mentoring opportunities: district- and school-based mentors provide support to new teachers;
- Dedicated time with curriculum supervisors: These supervisors provide support to new teachers on the instructional handbook and materials as well as classroom organization and management; and
- A *Foundations of Effective Teaching* course: a mandatory 10-session course (available online and in person) focusing on research-based pedagogy and instructional practices.

Second and third-year teachers are then supposed to be offered three forms of support:

- Access to district-based mentors through email, phone and webinars;
- Access to web resources that serve as a library for best practices for teaching; and
- Courses offered by the union.

The Reality

In practice, not unlike many districts' support programs for new teachers, few new teachers reported receiving support, especially through mentors. In a 2012 district survey, over two-thirds of responding teachers said they didn't have a mentor, and almost half said they had not attended seminars for new teachers.



Conversations with district staff and principals indicated that while orientation meetings and the *Foundations of Effective Teaching* course are part of a first-year teacher's induction, the mentoring component—either via district-based or school-based mentors—does not consistently exist unless the principal takes the initiative and teams up a new teacher with a mentor.

There is no district-level expectation that in-person mentoring will continue to provide support after the first year. However, there are one or two opportunities per semester for second- and third-year teachers to meet with more senior teachers. These meetings are informal and not necessarily related to the teacher's practice or current challenges in the classroom.

3.2 Tenure is a meaningful designation in a teacher's career.

Finding: The district has taken steps to make tenure a more meaningful decision, including a substantial raise when teachers earn tenure.

In Pennsylvania, teachers earn tenure after three years of satisfactory performance. Teachers in Pittsburgh receive a sizeable salary bump of \$6,000 at the tenure point, which is about a 15 percent salary increase and far higher than the annual percentage increase up to that point. A large raise at tenure is a standard NCTQ recommendation, but we seldom find a district that has put that recommendation into place.

I think [new-teacher induction] is weak. That is one thing they can definitely do better.

– Pittsburgh principal

⁵⁵ Pittsburgh 2012 Teaching and Learning Conditions Survey.

In addition to the salary bump, the new-teacher evaluation system makes the tenure process more rigorous and robust than before. Nontenured teachers are observed more frequently than tenured teachers and have six separate ratings on a semester basis (see section 2.2), giving principals several opportunities to observe a teacher's instruction. One failing rating or two needs improvement ratings for nontenured teachers result in a termination and, as such, prevent teachers with these ratings from earning tenure.

3.3. Throughout teachers' careers, the district provides growth opportunities that allow them to receive additional compensation and responsibilities, and it also promotes retention.

Finding: Pittsburgh has four types of career ladder positions, which can result in an increase in salary between \$9,300 and \$13,300.

Career ladder roles can create opportunities to give high-performing teachers additional chances to advance, hopefully without having to leave the classroom. These roles differ in responsibilities and salary across school districts, but they have become increasingly acceptable ways to ensure retention and to reward and recognize effective teachers.

Pittsburgh's four career leadership roles, with varying responsibilities and salary differentials, have met with differing levels of success.

Career ladder positions	Description	Allows teacher to stay in classroom	Salary differential
Promise-Readiness Corps	This career ladder position is comprised of 60 teachers at three high schools who have been identified as effective in working with 9th and 10th grade students to improve outcomes and ensure that students enter 11th grade college ready. ⁵⁶ The teachers stay with the same group of students and serve in an advisory role for them. Cohorts of teachers receive bonuses if their students show better-than-expected results in student academic achievement, attendance and course credits earned. While initial results have shown that student results improved slightly, it is not clear that the role teachers play in these positions is more significant than what should be expected of all teachers in the district.	Yes	Bonuses from \$9,300 up to \$20,000 based on outcomes
Clinical Resident Instructor	The district created a sizeable number of new positions (21) to work at two district schools with a staffing model that essentially paired these teachers with new-teacher residents. The original intent of the program has essentially been discarded; the teacher residents were never hired because they were likely to be laid off in imminent budget cuts. ⁵⁷ These master teachers continue to be paid the salary differential.	Yes	\$13,300

56 There are 60 teachers who are in official promise-readiness corps career ladder positions. Another eight are provisional teachers who are also in this role but not in the career ladder position.

57 Pittsburgh Public Schools Press Release, June 1, 2011. "District Eliminates Teacher Academy"



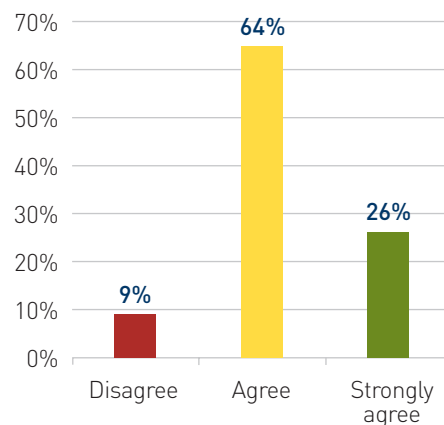
Career ladder positions	Description	Allows teacher to stay in classroom	Salary differential
Learning Environment Specialist	This position is held by four teachers in the district, who have shown a prior track record in improving school culture. These teachers are meant to be coaches for teachers, focusing on nonacademic issues to improve the overall learning environment of the school. Results on how these positions have improved academic or nonacademic outcomes for each school were not available.	No	\$9,300
Instructional Teacher Leader 2 (ITL2)	There are 60 ITL2s in 40 schools who work with peers in schools to improve instructional practice, usually focusing on teachers who have been rated proficient or distinguished in their evaluation. With the exception of five teachers, all original members of the ITL2 cohort that began in 2012 are still in these positions.	Yes, 60 percent of the time	\$11,300

Finding: The last of these career ladders, the Instructional Teacher Leader 2 (ITL2), is one of the district's most successful career ladder positions, but it is not found in some of Pittsburgh's neediest schools.

The 60 ITL2 teachers support other teachers in their buildings and in many cases contribute to the evaluation of teachers through classroom observations and providing input to the principal, while maintaining a part-time teaching load. The central office recommends that ITL2 teachers work with experienced teachers performing in the proficient or distinguished categories rather than novice or poorly performing teachers whom the district recommends should be supported instead by administrators. In some cases, however, with the consent of an administrator, new teachers and those with a low rating can receive support from both the school leader and the ITL2.

The satisfaction rate for teachers in the ITL2 role is high, and in focus groups principals were almost universally positive about their experiences with these teachers. This level of satisfaction is due, at least in part, to the successful implementation of the program, which includes extensive training.

Survey response: I am satisfied with my role as an ITL-2 (n=53)



Only 9 percent of the district's 60 ITL2s were not satisfied with their role. The program is highly regarded across all fronts as an effective career ladder role.

While the three other career ladder positions were launched before the ITL2s, they are not as widely lauded. As noted, the Clinical Resident Instructor positions still exist but not for the intended purpose of training large numbers of new teachers. In 2011, with seniority-based layoffs imminent, the district and teachers' union could not work out an exception for the new teachers assigned to the two district schools, who would have been laid off a few months later, taking with them the district's investment. Consequently, these teacher leaders are not working with their intended audience but continue to receive the salary differential as the district promised.

The four Learning Environment Specialists are placed only in four schools, and thus are providing services to a very small subset of Pittsburgh Public Schools.

While some teachers in the Promise Readiness Corps seem to be meeting goals of improving student performance,⁵⁸ it is unclear what justifies the additional investment by the district. Since the position is described as one of collaboration and following students from 9th to 10th grade, it seems that this role could be filled by any qualified high school teacher.

Availability of ITL2s

Given that the ITL2 program is nearly universally praised, it is regrettable that not all schools, even some identified as high need, have access to the support of an ITL2. The district reports that 15 schools have no ITL2, while others have up to two. In some schools, ITL2 positions were just not filled. For example, Westinghouse High School, the lowest-performing high school in the district, was eligible for an ITL2 in the first year of the program, but the position was never filled.

The district explained that the lack of ITL2s in specific schools was because of assignment through a "mutual matching" process in which both teachers and principals had to agree to the placement. Once a teacher has gone through the process and been offered a position as an ITL2, he or she is allowed to submit preferences for assignments. Principals were given access to the list of preferences and had the opportunity to reach out to candidates. Principals then submitted their preferences and central office staff placed ITL2s where there were matches. If nobody selected a particular school, then that school did not receive the services.

These new positions were created as a single cohort in 2012, with training conducted as a group. Each ITL2 theoretically agreed to take on an assignment for three years, but there has been attrition as some employees have moved, resigned or decided to go back to the classroom full time. The program was not set up to adjust for inevitable attrition and has not hired replacements as positions were vacated.

All of these career ladder positions are funded in part by private foundation money or federal grant funds. ITL2s have been funded by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (both Title I

58 Chute, E. (April 2014). Student achievement rewarding for Pittsburgh teaching teams. *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, <http://www.post-gazette.com/news/education/2014/04/14/Student-achievement-rewarding-for-Pittsburgh-teaching-teams/stories/201404140045>.



and Title II), which is an ongoing funding source based on the population of students that qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Federal funds, including School Improvement Grants and the Teacher Incentive Fund, have also supported career ladder roles. Some of these funds, unlike ongoing formula federal funds, are one time in nature; positions and services paid for with one-time funds will have to be discontinued or moved to another funding source once the money is no longer available.

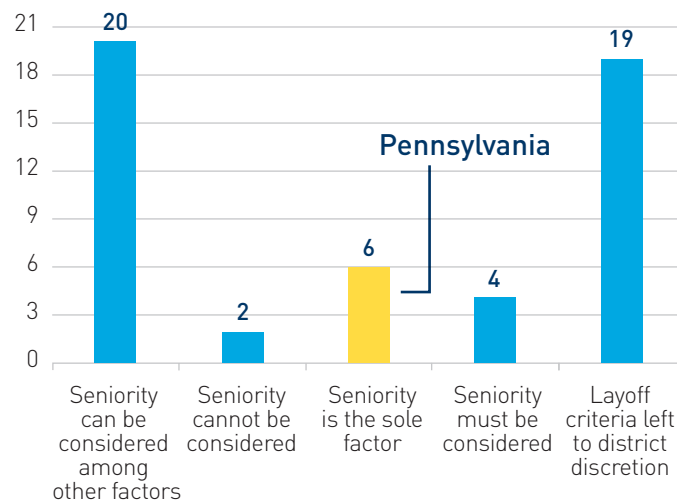
3.4 When teachers are laid off, performance is a key factor in deciding who stays or goes.

Finding: Performance is not a component in determining teacher layoffs.

Pennsylvania state law dictates that teacher layoffs must take place by seniority, meaning that the least experienced teachers must be laid off first. Pittsburgh, bound by these rules, operates within this framework. Therefore, teachers are laid off by seniority in their certification area.

Many states have changed their layoff policies in recent years so that seniority is no longer the sole determining factor. Some states (e.g., Colorado, Florida, Indiana) now require that a teacher's performance be the top criterion for determining who will be laid off.

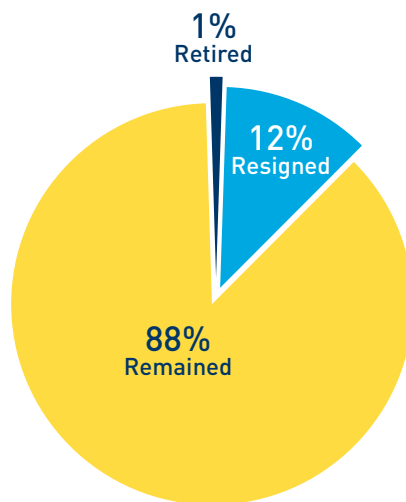
Do states prevent districts from overemphasizing seniority in layoff decisions?



Pennsylvania is one of only six states requiring that seniority is the sole factor in layoffs. Most other states allow districts to decide or require classroom performance to be a top criterion.

Because the district has had to close schools due to declining enrollment, layoffs have been a necessity in recent years. Layoffs create incredible anxiety and feelings of personal rejection in a workforce. Almost always, some teachers who are handed pink slips do not actually lose their job, but they resign anyway.

In 2012-2013, 131 teachers were laid off. Where did they go?



In Pittsburgh last year, 13 percent of teachers who were laid off and later called back to work elected to resign or retire anyway. Unfortunately, it is often the more talented teachers with the most options who are unlikely to wait to see if a pink slip leads to an actual layoff.

3.5 Poorly performing teachers are dismissed in a timely manner.

Finding: Pittsburgh's evaluation system allows ineffective teachers who have yet to earn tenure to be dismissed in a timely manner.

Teachers without tenure

Pittsburgh has the statutory flexibility to dismiss poorly performing teachers who haven't earned tenure, but there is not much evidence that the district exercises this authority.

Under Pennsylvania law nontenured teachers who receive an overall rating of needs improvement at any point in their three years before tenure are required to participate in an intensive support program the following semester. Any nontenured teacher who receives *two* such ratings at any point within the three years can be dismissed. Also under state law, a nontenured teacher who receives a single overall rating of failing can be dismissed by the district. Some teachers in any of these categories may decide teaching is not for them and resign; others will improve with more support, and still others will have to be dismissed. The district has dismissed a small number of pretenured teachers on an annual basis.



End-of-year outcomes for teachers on improvement plans

School year	Total nontenured teachers	Number of teachers on improvement plans (tenured and nontenured)	Number of nontenured teachers dismissed	Retired or resigned	Leave of absence	Additional below average or unsatisfactory rating	Improved
2009-2010	296	130	15	11	6	55	43
2010-2011	323	133	5	16	13	57	42
2011-2012	342	140	13	22	5	59	41
2012-2013	95	124	2	24	6	59	33

Pittsburgh tracks teachers that are on improvement plans and notes what the end-of-year outcomes are for each. In each year studied, over 40 percent of teachers on improvement plans went on to get another below average or unsatisfactory rating, while about one-third improved.

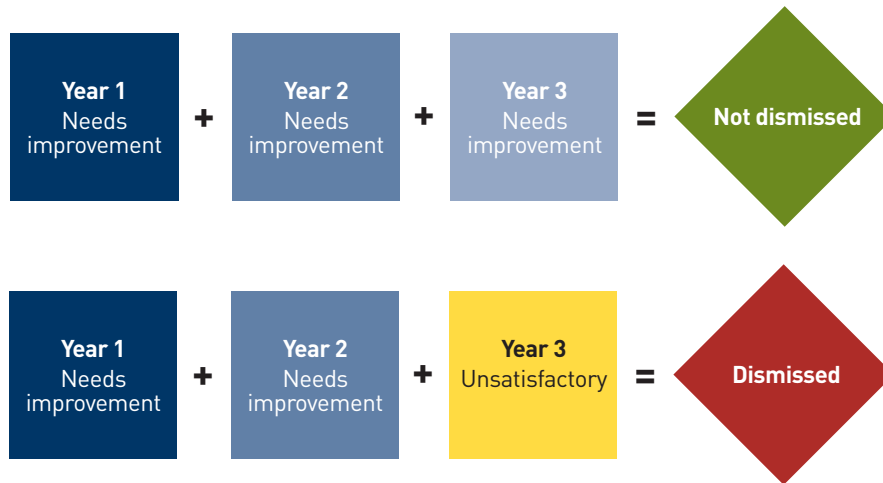
Tenured teachers

Finding: Even under Pittsburgh's new evaluation model, it can take one to two years to dismiss a poorly performing tenured teacher.

While Pittsburgh has made substantive changes to its evaluation system to better identify struggling teachers, state law still limits districts' ability to dismiss a poorly performing teacher in fewer than two years. For the purposes of dismissal, the state system reverts from its new four-rating system back to its previous two-category system: satisfactory or unsatisfactory. The state converts the first three ratings, including needs improvement, to satisfactory performance, while only failing is considered unsatisfactory and may lead to dismissal. However, a teacher who receives a rating of needs improvement twice in a 10-year period may also be considered unsatisfactory under the state's definition. While the rules for dismissal were clear under the old system, trying to squeeze ratings from the four new categories into the old binary system is likely to lead to confusion and disputes at the school district level.




Because tenured teachers receive a rating only once a year, it can take two years (or more) to fire a poorly performing tenured teacher. For example, a teacher who received one proficient rating followed by two needs improvement ratings would still only have one unsatisfactory rating for the purposes of the binary state system. As a result, the teacher would not be eligible for dismissal unless he or she received another low rating the following year.

How long does it take to dismiss a poorly performing teacher?



Tenured teachers whose performance stagnate in the needs improvement category can stay in the classroom over three years without dismissal.

Standard 3 Recommendations

-  **1. Make sure every school has access to an ITL2.** If there are budget restrictions that prevent every school from having this position, the process of determining which schools get ITL2s and how many they should get should be based on school need. Increase incentives for extremely high-need schools to try to attract suitable applicants willing to work in those schools. Student achievement data, the number of novice teachers in the school, and the experience level of the principal should all be considered. In addition, there should be opportunities to fill vacant ITL2 positions so that attrition does not result in schools losing this valuable resource.
-  **2. Allow performance to be a factor in determining which teachers will be laid off.** Pennsylvania is one of few states where seniority is the sole criterion determining teacher layoffs. This is not an effective policy in promoting effective teaching, and the state should revise its policy so that performance is a preponderant criterion in determining layoffs.
-  **3. Align the dismissal policy with the evaluation system.** The new evaluation system differentiates teachers into four rating levels. For the purpose of dismissal, however, the state converts evaluation ratings back to two ratings: unsatisfactory and satisfactory. It is important that the state provides clear guidance on dismissal that directly relates to the new rating system to avoid confusion for districts and teachers.



4. **Update career ladder positions and repurpose those that are not working as originally intended.** The district has tracked the success of its career programs, and some of them have been more successful than others. Given the cost and potential value of these positions, repurposing them so that they better fit both teachers' skills and the district's needs would benefit the district. Keeping them as they are relegates high-quality teachers to roles in which they do not use their skills to their fullest capacity.



5. **Initiate a district-wide mentoring program for novice teachers.** This could be comprised of school-based programs with a framework determined by the district in consultation with the union. Teachers in their first year should get the most support, but it is also important for teachers in their second and third years to have access to resources as needed.

WHERE IT IS BEING DONE:

With the support of a \$55 million public-private partnership, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools created a program called Project LIFT to improve their historically lowest-performing schools and engage high-performing teachers. The district began with teachers and school leaders designing solutions to improve teaching roles, the use of instructional time, and the use of technology for the entire school. The result was the creation of new roles within these schools for excellent teachers:

- Multi-classroom Leaders: Teachers who are held accountable for the development of a team of other educators.
- Blended-Learning Teachers: Teachers who use blended learning methods to instruct students.
- Expanded Impact Teachers: Teachers who provide personalized and enriched instruction to multiple classes with the help of a paraprofessional.
- Elementary Specialized Teachers: Teachers in elementary schools who focus on either one subject or a pair of subjects with additional support from teachers or paraprofessionals.

Participating teachers receive a pay differential of up to \$23,000, which can be up to 50 percent of their salary. The program is competitive: Last year 708 teachers applied for 19 positions. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools plans to have half of the schools in its district implementing the roles in the program by the 2017-2018 school year.



This recommendation requires only a change in practice.



This recommendation requires a formal negotiation between the district and the teachers' union.



This recommendation requires a change in state law.



Standard 4.

Compensation

Pittsburgh is one of a small number of districts that is a leader in designing new pay scales that attempt to forge a closer link between teacher performance and salary. In the 2010-2011 school year, Pittsburgh Public Schools implemented a performance-based salary schedule, and any teacher hired after that time was automatically placed on the new schedule, while veteran teachers remained on the old schedule. The findings and analysis below will focus primarily on the new schedule.

As is the case in nearly every school district in the United States, Pittsburgh's pre-2010 salary schedule was designed for teachers to advance in pay based on years of experience and educational credits.⁵⁹ An increasing number of districts are now experimenting with other for-pay advancement measures, responding to a large body of research showing that 1) there is a nonlinear relationship between experience and teacher effectiveness (after their initial learning curve, teachers do not keep getting better every year) and 2) there is no relationship between teachers who have taken a lot of advanced coursework and their teaching effectiveness.⁶⁰

Basic structure

All beginning Pittsburgh Public Schools teachers, regardless of how many graduate educational credits or degrees they have earned, begin working at the same salary level.⁶¹ The district continues to factor experience into teacher pay but only until the teacher's 10th year. And while teachers progress along the traditional steps until year 10, they are not allowed to advance a step if they earn a failing rating on their summative evaluation.

After 10 years there are no more automatic steps in the salary schedule relating to years of experience, although there is additional career incremental funding for a limited number of years.⁶² At that

59 Ninety-three percent of the school districts in NCTQ's Teacher Contract Database still use a step-and-lane salary schedule based on years of experience and educational credits or degrees.

60 Hanushek, E., Kain, J., & Rivkin S. (1998). *Teachers, Schools and Academic Achievement*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

61 Teachers who enter the district with experience from other districts are placed higher on the pay scale to recognize that experience.

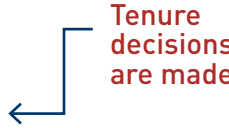
62 Unlike step advancement, these career increments are paid only for a few years rather than becoming an ongoing part of a teacher's compensation package.

point in a teacher's career, the only way to earn additional compensation is to advance a level or take on additional responsibility in one of the district's four existing career ladder roles. (See section 3.3). To advance a level requires earning at least one distinguished rating over a single three-year period or being ranked in the top 20 percent of similarly experienced teachers based on student-growth measures.

For teachers on the new salary schedule, with the exception of additional pay for additional duties, once a teacher moves up a step or over a level, he or she does not move backwards on the pay scale.

Only teachers who are on the highest level are eligible for one of the four career ladder positions, earning an additional \$9,300 - \$13,900.

Pittsburgh's new teacher salary schedule

Pretenure	Step 1	\$ 40,000				
	Step 2	\$ 41,000				
	Step 3	\$ 42,000				
Tenure	Step 4	\$ 48,000				
	Step 5	\$ 50,000	\$ 55,000			
	Step 6	\$ 52,000	\$ 58,000			
	Step 7	\$ 54,000	\$ 61,000			
	Step 8	\$ 56,000	\$ 64,000	\$ 72,000	\$ 80,000	
	Step 9	\$ 58,000	\$ 67,000	\$ 76,000	\$ 90,000	
	Step 10	\$ 60,000	\$ 70,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 100,000	
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	
Professional Growth Level						

4.1 The district's compensation package is competitive with that of other school districts in the area.

4.2 Raises are tied to a teacher's impact on student learning, not indiscriminately to education credits or experience.

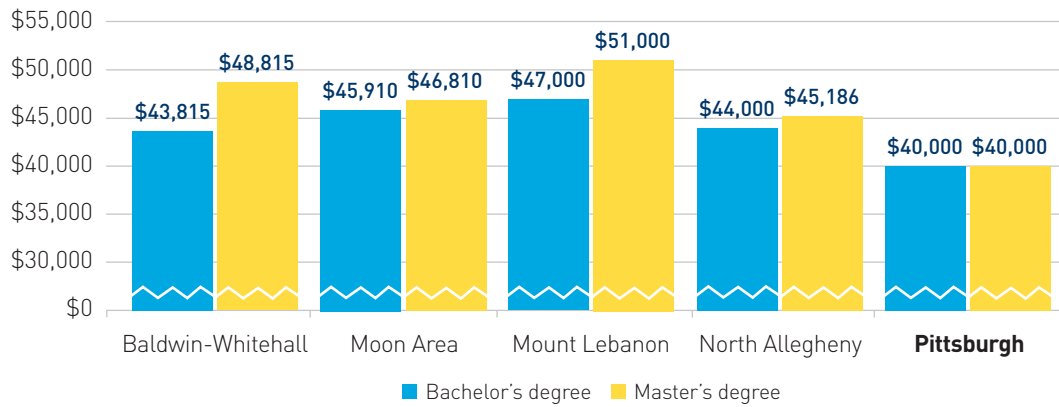
Finding: Pittsburgh's salaries start out lower than surrounding school districts', but they quickly increase to a competitive level provided a teacher is a solid performer.

Pittsburgh salaries start out as much as 15 percent below some nearby districts, most notably the relatively affluent Mount Lebanon Public Schools, where the starting salary is a full \$7,000 more for a teacher with a bachelor's degree. Since Pittsburgh does not differentiate salaries based on educational level (graduate credits), and the surrounding districts all do, this difference is even larger for teachers with a master's degree.



Having the lowest starting salary among potential competitors in the region puts Pittsburgh at a potential disadvantage when recruiting new teachers.

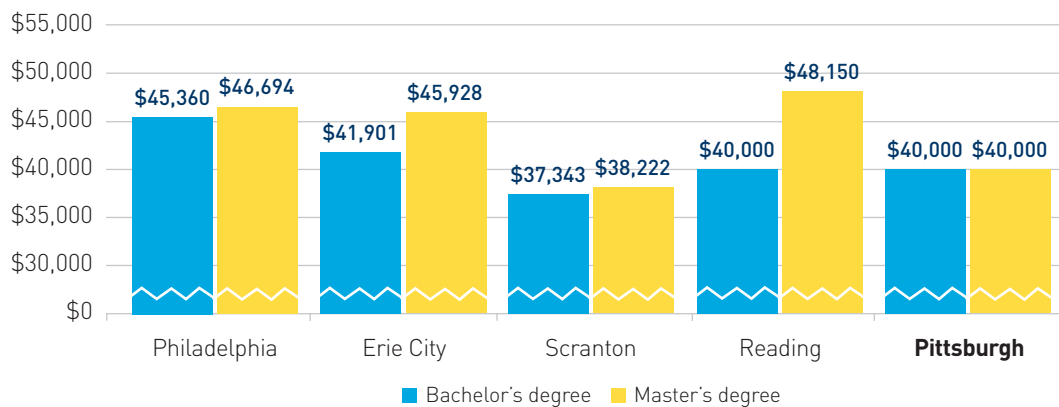
Pittsburgh area school districts' beginning teacher salary, 2012-2013



Pittsburgh teachers start their careers at \$40,000. Almost all surrounding school districts provide first-year salaries that are larger than that, especially for teachers with master's degrees.

When compared to other urban school districts across the state, not just the surrounding suburban districts, Pittsburgh's starting salaries continue to fare poorly. With only a few exceptions, new teachers in Pittsburgh earn less than their counterparts in other urban Pennsylvania districts.

Pennsylvania city school districts' beginning teacher salary, 2013-2014



While Pittsburgh is more competitive with other urban school districts than with its neighboring districts, new teachers in Philadelphia earn over 10 percent more than their peers in Pittsburgh.

We want to recognize and reward top performers for their extraordinary impact on their students...

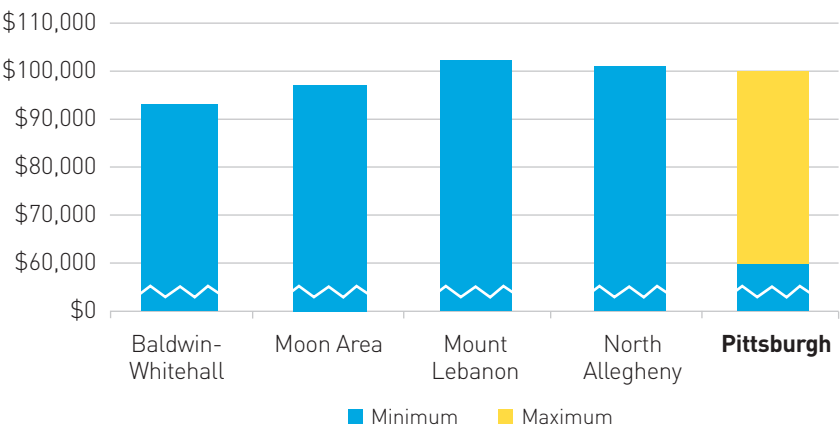
– District official

Finding: Pittsburgh has designed a system to retain high performers.

Comparing the maximum potential salary for Pittsburgh teachers is more challenging than for other districts we have studied because, with the district having abandoned the traditional step-and-lane process, performance plays a significant role. For our purposes, we compare what teachers can earn who have either been ranked in the top 20 percent of their peers or been rated as distinguished and are able to move to the top of the pay scale.

The bottom line is that salaries of teachers who are solid performers are competitive but not significantly better than those of surrounding districts. Teachers who do not meet this performance bar could find better compensation in surrounding districts, which is precisely the signal Pittsburgh intended with its new salary schedule.

Maximum annual teacher salary with a master’s degree



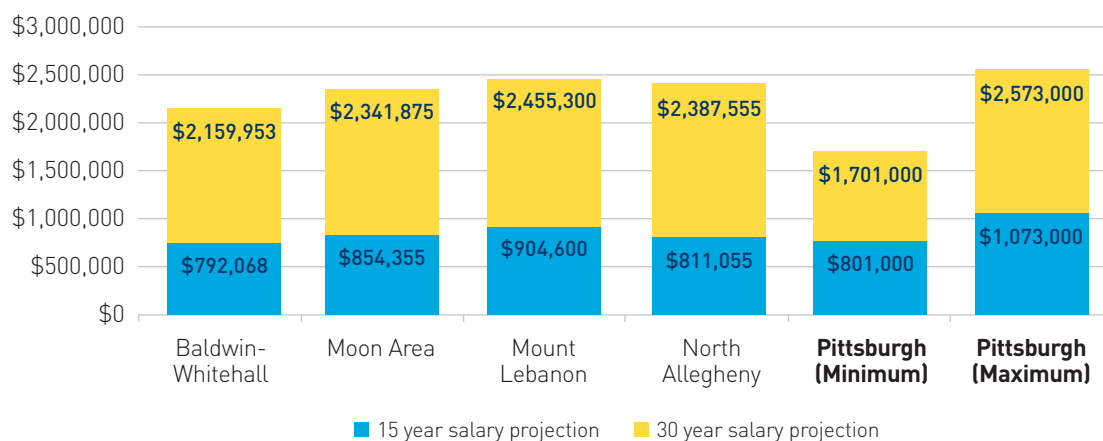
Salary for Pittsburgh teachers who are solid performers match the highest salaries in surrounding districts; however, teachers who do not advance to the top of the scale may be financially better off in other districts.



Finding: Pittsburgh teachers can reach the maximum level on the salary schedule faster than teachers in surrounding districts.

One tremendous advantage of the Pittsburgh system is that teachers who are highly effective can progress more quickly on the salary schedule. Any teacher can reach the top salary step in just 10 years, at least five years earlier than teachers in neighboring districts. That relatively quick pace was a feature of the pre-2010 schedule, when teachers who reached the highest step in 10 years had to earn a master's degree to keep increasing their salaries. Now it is performance that drives teachers' pay increases, not graduate credits.

Lifetime earnings for teachers working in Pittsburgh and neighboring districts



After teaching for 15 years, Pittsburgh teachers will cumulatively earn about the same or more than what they would have earned in other districts, no matter how they are rated. Over the course of their 30-year careers, Pittsburgh teachers can cumulatively earn more than teachers in surrounding districts, but only if they are considered a solid performer. For teachers who fail to advance through the levels by earning that critical distinguished rating, or by rising to the top of their peer group, lifetime earnings are significantly less than in other districts: only \$1.7 million compared to \$2.4 million for a teacher in Mount Lebanon.⁶³

Even though teachers start, and in some cases end, at salaries lower than their counterparts in surrounding districts, career earnings for Pittsburgh teachers are competitive with, if not better than, those of teachers in other districts because they can reach the top of the schedule in relatively few years. Looking at earnings at two points, after 15 years and again after 30 years, teachers' earnings are competitive in all instances with the exception of those who do not advance to higher levels of the pay scale after 15 years on the job. Accordingly, teachers responding to NCTQ's survey

⁶³ NCTQ uses a standard measure to calculate a typical teacher's expected lifetime earnings in any district we study: the salary of a 30 year veteran teacher who earned a master's degree after working five years, adding an additional 30 credits after 10 years, and an additional 30 credits after 15 years to qualify for the PhD. Salary level. For Pittsburgh (minimum), teachers do not advance performance levels but for Pittsburgh (maximum), our measure assumes advancement every three years after tenure.

of teachers reported feeling well compensated. When asked whether they felt compensation was competitive with surrounding districts, 64 percent of Pittsburgh teachers agreed or strongly agreed that it was.⁶⁴

The 2014-2015 school year is the fourth year for the new salary schedule, and high-performing teachers on this schedule are now eligible to advance to the next level for the first time since the implementation of the new schedule. Although teachers have the opportunity to make more if they perform well, there are understandable concerns about advancement when there is simultaneous implementation of the new salary schedule alongside a new evaluation system. Teachers are unsure how many of them are going to move to the next level and, over time, how their lifetime earnings will be affected by their performance.

4.3 The district offers financial incentives to employ and retain effective teachers in high-need schools and critical-shortage content areas.

Finding: The district does not use financial incentives to encourage teachers to work or stay in high-need schools or critical-shortage content areas.

When looking solely at salary, high-performing teachers have good reason to work in Pittsburgh, but those who are not performing at the highest level may have more reason to consider teaching in other districts. Commendably, the district has designed a salary schedule that is meant to retain high-performing teachers. The district, however, does not have a similarly strong policy to encourage or retain teachers in high-need schools or subject areas through financial incentives.

The research on the success of incentives is mixed.⁶⁵ A recent Mathematica study known as the Talent Transfer Initiative showed that by offering an additional \$20,000 per teacher, seven school districts were able to fill 90 percent of their targeted vacancies in hard-to-staff schools with some of the districts' highest-performing teachers. However, only a quarter of teachers that were eligible to apply to the program chose to do so, and some positions were left unfilled, even with the \$20,000 incentive.⁶⁶

While Pittsburgh does not offer monetary incentives, the district has surveyed a subset of teachers to identify the circumstances under which they would be willing to transfer to a hard-to-staff school. Of teachers seeking transfers, working with an inspiring leader was the most frequently identified response as to why teachers would want to move. Although some teachers indicated that they would consider transferring to a hard-to-staff school for additional compensation, twice as many said that they would not be willing to do so under any circumstance.⁶⁷

64 It is important to note that the majority of teachers responding to the survey were hired before 2009 and are on the "old" pay scale that does not require high performance to advance.

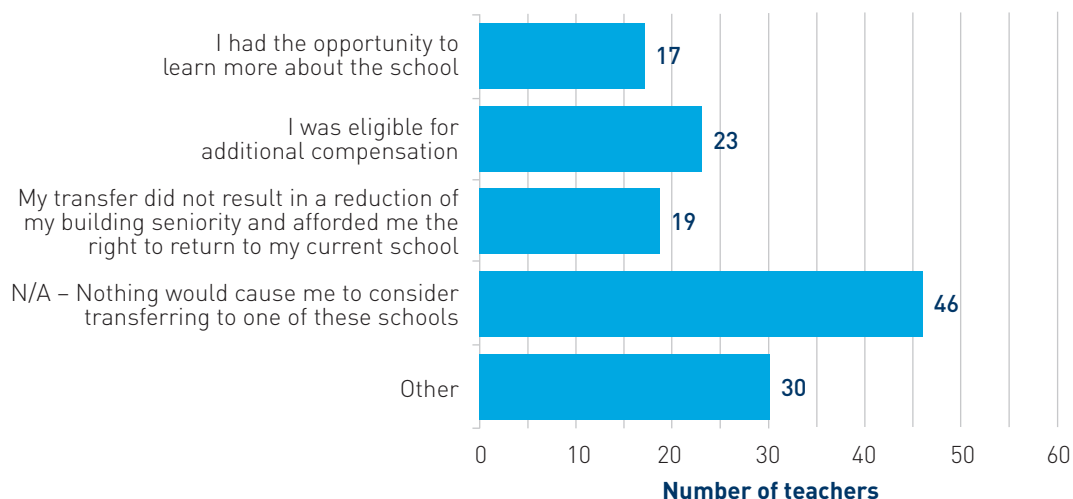
65 Glazerman, S., Protik, A., Teh, B., Bruch, J., Max, J. (November 2013). Transfer Incentives for High Performing Teachers: Final Results from a Multisite Randomized Experiment. *Mathematica Policy Research*.

66 Ibid

67 Source: Central office survey of teachers who attempted to transfer voluntarily for the 2013-2014 school year.



While I am not currently considering a transfer to any of these schools, I might consider one if:



Teachers interested in transferring to other schools identified an open position in their preferred grade or subject (included in “other”) as a common reason to go to a hard-to-staff school, but almost half said they would not move to a hard-to-staff school under any circumstance.

Finding: The contractual requirement of using building seniority to determine which teachers lose their teaching assignment in the case of budget cuts or program changes creates a disincentive for teachers to transfer to high-need schools.

When a school must reduce its number of positions and involuntarily transfer a teacher to another school, the teachers’ contract requires that school-building seniority determines who goes. In Pittsburgh, teachers cited the desire to keep their building seniority as one reason they were hesitant to voluntarily transfer to another school. Under the current contract, if a teacher voluntarily transfers to another school, building seniority is reduced by half. As a result, building-level seniority, while well intentioned to foster the stability of schools’ staff, has the unintended consequence of discouraging teachers from moving to high-need schools.

It is important to note that in most districts, involuntary transfer determinations are based on district seniority, rather than on building seniority.

Standard 4 Recommendations

Pittsburgh's new compensation system does a lot of things right. It is new, however, and its impact on recruitment and retention should be monitored closely through surveys and other communication with teachers. The changes below are recommended to enhance the current policies:



1. **Consider increasing starting teacher salary.** Raising starting salaries to be more competitive with surrounding districts could increase the quantity and quality of the pool of applicants to the district.



2. **Monitor advancement on salary schedule.** Keep close tabs on trends of teachers who advance and those who do not. Disaggregate data by poverty level of school, grade level and subject. Watch for signs that teaching assignments are determining advancement rather than performance.



3. **Use a district-based seniority system rather than a building-level seniority system to determine who loses their teaching assignment.** This will remove the inherent disincentive that teachers have to transfer schools that comes with using building-level seniority.



4. **Raise salaries so that some portion of teachers earn more money in Pittsburgh than in surrounding districts, so that Pittsburgh is not just competitive but superior in pay.** Now, teacher pay in Pittsburgh is competitive with surrounding districts for strong teachers, but it does not offer a significant advantage.



5. **Look for high-impact but low-cost ways to reward high-performing teachers.** In addition to or in lieu of current career ladder roles, Pittsburgh could offer higher salaries to the top teachers (teacher "chairs") who consistently produce the greatest learning gains. Recognized chairs could be located in high-need schools, which could benefit greatly from the expertise these teachers bring with them. One chair in each school would send a strong signal that the district values its superstars and would also be a morale booster for all teachers.



This recommendation requires only a change in practice.



This recommendation requires a formal negotiation between the district and the teachers' union.



This recommendation requires a change in state law.



Standard 5.

Professional Culture

5.1 A teacher's on-site work schedule is eight hours and includes substantial time beyond the instructional day for individual and common planning.

Finding: The Pittsburgh school day is shorter than schools in surrounding districts'.

The length of the school day in Pittsburgh is 7 hours, 16 minutes for both elementary and secondary teachers.⁶⁸ This is slightly shorter than the national average of 7 hours, 30 minutes, as well as most of Pittsburgh's neighboring districts, nearly all of which have an eight-hour workday. Although many Pittsburgh teachers choose to work an eight hour or longer day, creating a formalized eight-hour schedule actually can provide more flexibility for the school, establishing non-instructional time that can be used for a variety of purposes.

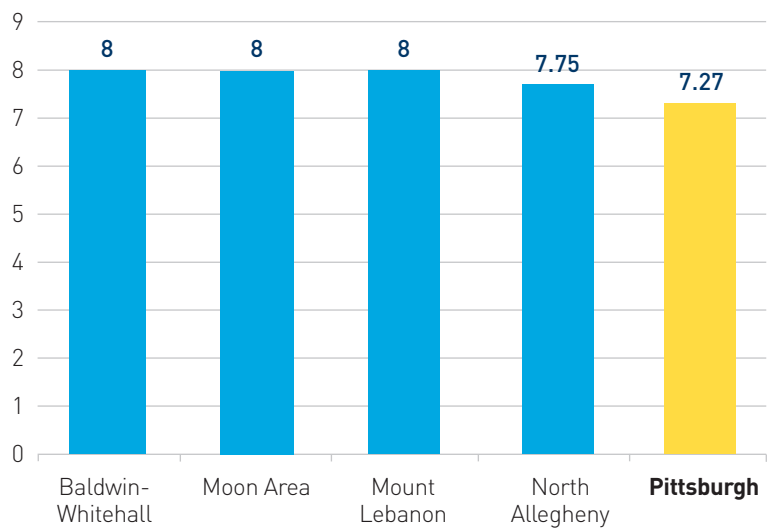
Time built into the school day for collaborative planning among teachers has gained attention in recent years, as teachers and school leaders across the nation have begun to recognize the tremendous value teachers receive from having a specific time allotted to working with one another, not just on lesson plans but also examining student data, comparing the quality of results in areas where there are common instruction and assessments, and integrating new standards and curricula.

It is worth noting that in many other countries such as Japan and South Korea, teachers are with their students only 60 percent of the day.⁶⁹ While American school teachers often spend more time with students than their Asian counterparts, that is not the case in Pittsburgh. In Pittsburgh, elementary teachers are with their students 65 percent of the workday, and high school teachers are with students 54 percent of the day.

68 The district notes that there are seven schools with an eight hour school day. Arlington, Colfax, King, Weil, SciTec, Brashear, and Perry.

69 Stevenson, H., & Stigler, J. W. (1992). *The learning gap: Why our schools are failing and what we can learn from Japanese and Chinese education*. New York: Summit Books.

Length of school day in Pittsburgh and surrounding districts



Pittsburgh has the shortest workday for teachers compared to surrounding districts, most of which have an eight-hour day.

Finding: Pittsburgh high school teachers spend less time with students and have more time for professional development than their colleagues in most districts, but the district cannot provide evidence of this practice having yielded results.

Currently, the daily schedule for secondary teachers in Pittsburgh includes five classes, a single preparation period each day, and a duty period, which is defined as lunch or hallway duty. In addition, depending on the school or department in which they are working, high school teachers have an additional period that can be used for professional development, tutoring or advanced placement preparation. Different from a preparation period, when a teacher is usually working independently, a school administrator can direct teachers to participate in specific professional development activities during this time. High school teachers (not middle school teachers) also have their day extended by 45 minutes once a week, a time intended for teacher interaction and planning time.

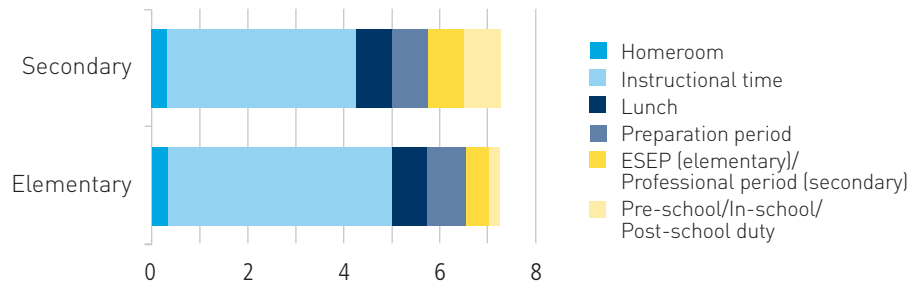
While this schedule creates more time for planning and working with colleagues, it increases the number of teachers (and therefore the cost) needed to staff high schools. If the time is used wisely, it is an excellent investment; if not, it is a costly experiment.



Finding: Pittsburgh elementary and middle school teachers would benefit from more time for collaborative planning.

Elementary school teachers, who have to teach one more period a day than secondary teachers, have less noninstructional time. They do have a planning period each day but are given less time for planning and professional development.

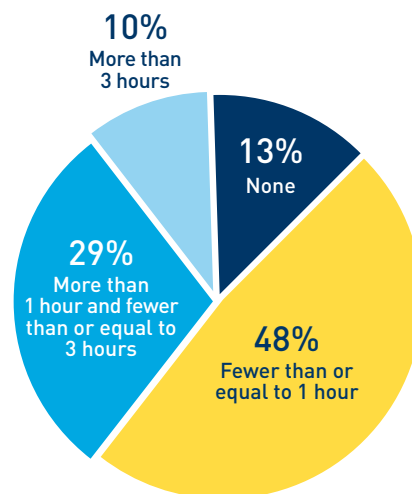
Sample day for elementary and secondary (high school) teachers



Elementary teachers in Pittsburgh have less time (25 minutes) for professional development than secondary teachers, who have a daily professional period.

Even with significant collaborative time built into the current contract, Pittsburgh teachers report that they spend little time planning collaboratively. In fact, 60 percent of teachers responding to a district survey reported devoting an hour or less to collaborative planning each week.⁷⁰

In an average week, how much time do you devote to collaborative planning time during the school day? (N=1957)



Almost all teachers reported having fewer than or equal to three hours a week for collaborative planning, with almost half stating that it was actually one hour or less a week—even though high school teachers technically have up to six hours a week to engage with colleagues.

⁷⁰ The Teaching and Learning Conditions survey is administered yearly by the Pittsburgh school district. Data is from the 2012 survey.

Finding: The district should do further analysis on how the daily professional period for secondary teachers is being used.

The amount of noninstructional time that secondary teachers in Pittsburgh have can be a benefit, but given its cost, this time should be carefully scrutinized by the district on a regular basis. From our own analysis, professional time seems to vary greatly from teacher to teacher and school to school. While flexibility to determine what makes the most sense for a specific set of teachers is important, teachers are experiencing supports inconsistently, and there seems to be no accountability for how the time is used. Further exploration can provide valuable information on how this time is being used and can inform recommendations on best practices.

Following are some questions that should be answered to ensure that teachers' noninstructional time is productive and focused on student achievement:

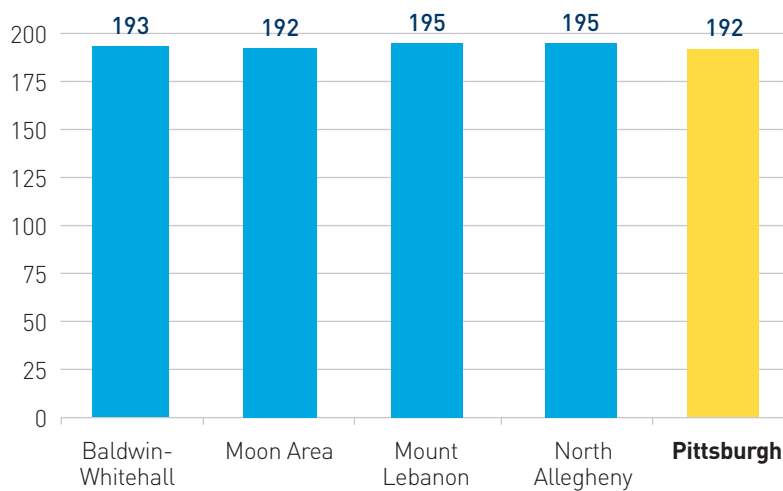
- Do teachers have consistent access to student data to examine when working together?
- Are teachers developing common assessments where possible to provide points of comparison on student performance?
- Do teachers deliver common lesson plans and work together to refine the lesson plans to achieve maximum results?
- Do teachers regularly work with other teachers of their subject area, or is all the time used for interdisciplinary planning?
- Do schools have the ability to match a teacher who is weak in an area with a teacher who is strong in the same area?
- Do teachers set a clear agenda for every collaborative period?
- Do teachers have access to expertise at the school and district level when needed? Is there access to external experts when needed?

Work Year

Pittsburgh teachers' work year, at 192 days, is fairly long, especially in contrast to peer districts in Pennsylvania such as Erie and Scranton, although it is a little shorter than most of the surrounding districts. The national average in the 114 school districts tracked by NCTQ is 187.



Teacher work year in Pittsburgh and surrounding districts



Pittsburgh's teacher year is on a par with most of the surrounding districts, although slightly shorter than Mount Lebanon and North Allegheny.

Finding: Teachers have 10 noninstructional days that are well-distributed throughout the year; however, nearly half of this time does not appear to be dedicated to professional development.

Pittsburgh teachers have 10 days without students, which is slightly higher than the national average of nine days. These days are dedicated to both clerical/organizational activities as well as professional development.

The calendar indicates that these days are appropriately spaced throughout the year, with a particular emphasis on the start of the school year so that teachers can benefit from their professional development throughout the rest of the year.

Noninstructional teacher workdays, 2013-2014

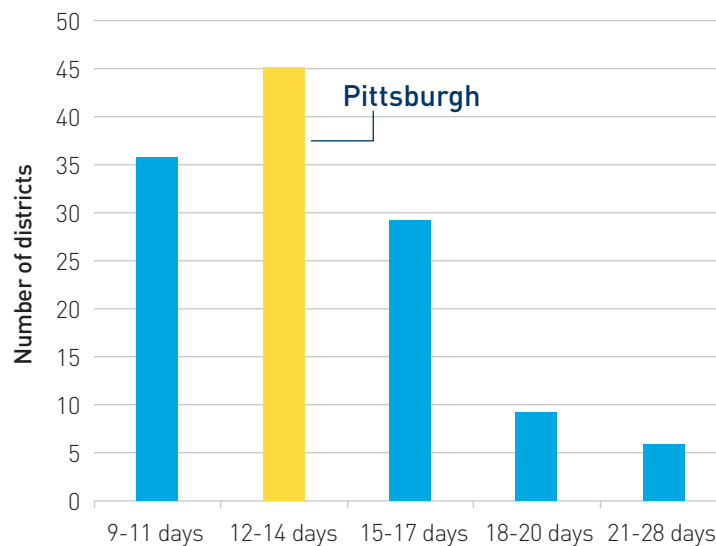
Day	Purpose of day
August 20, 2013	First day of school for staff
August 21, 2013	District-wide professional development
August 22, 2013	Clerical day
August 23, 2013	School-level professional development
October 14th or 18th	Parent-teacher conferences
November 5, 2013	Professional development day
January 21, 2014	Clerical day
January 22, 2014	Professional development day
June 10, 2014	Clerical day
June 11, 2014	Clerical day

While the number of teacher days without students is important because it gives teachers uninterrupted time to plan and prepare, spending 40 percent of this time on clerical tasks is higher than the norm and a questionable use of a dedicated day. In Pittsburgh, the daily cost of teacher salaries for professional development days is over \$840,000, making the cost of four days explicitly dedicated to organizing or dismantling classrooms \$3.4 million.⁷¹ While some work time in the classroom is reasonable, especially at the beginning and end of the year, teachers report needing more time for professional development to teach effectively, especially on special education, differentiating instruction and closing the achievement gap. The district should consider the best use of all noninstructional days, including ones now used for clerical days.⁷²

5.2 Teachers receive a reasonable amount of general leave (sick and personal)

Pittsburgh's general leave policies are slightly more than what NCTQ recommends. Teachers receive 12 days of sick leave and two days for personal use (beginning in their third year of service) on an annual basis. The median leave package for the 114 districts in the NCTQ Teacher Contract Database is 12 days per year for general leave, including both sick and personal leave.

Number of general leave days in Teacher Contract Database districts



Pittsburgh teachers get 14 days of general leave (sick and personal), which is on a par with what the majority of districts offer to teachers.

⁷¹ The daily cost of teachers is calculated by dividing total teacher salary costs by the total number of teacher days and adding 25 percent for salary-driven benefits.

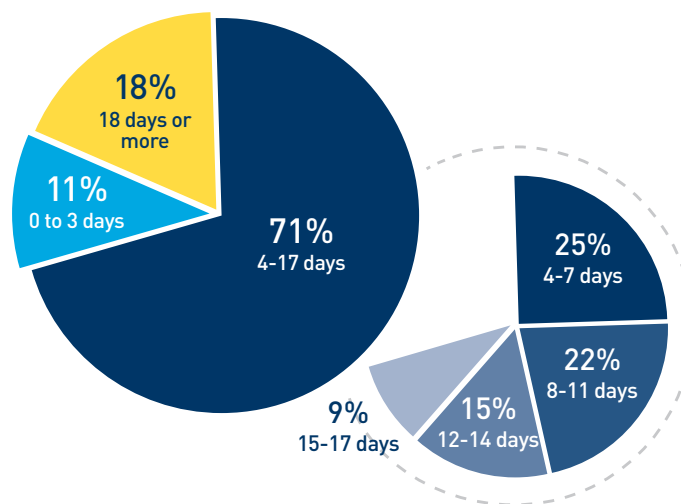
⁷² Pittsburgh 2012 Teaching and Learning Conditions Survey.



Finding: Chronically absent teachers accounted for just over 40 percent of the total teacher absences in the 2012-2013 school year.

The district had an attendance rate of 94 percent in the 2012-2013 school year, but that number masks teachers at both ends of this spectrum.⁷³ Teachers were out of the classroom an average of 12 days that year, but 11 percent of teachers were out of the classroom three days or fewer. On the other end of the spectrum, after eliminating long-term leaves due to events such as surgery or childbirth, 18 percent of the teacher workforce in Pittsburgh were “chronically absent,” meaning they were absent more than 18 days out of 192. One out of every three chronically absent teachers was absent in one-day increments, indicating that the days were spread throughout the year rather than taken as consecutive days off.⁷⁴ If the district was able to reduce the number of days chronically absent teachers miss down to the current district average of 12 days, it could realize almost half a million dollars in substitute cost savings while keeping teachers of record in the classroom with their students.⁷⁵

Pittsburgh teacher absences 2012-2013



Pittsburgh teachers were absent an average of 12 days in the 2012-2013 school year, but 11 percent of teachers had excellent attendance, with fewer than three days out of the classroom, and 18 percent were chronically absent; i.e., out more than 18 days of the school year.⁷⁶

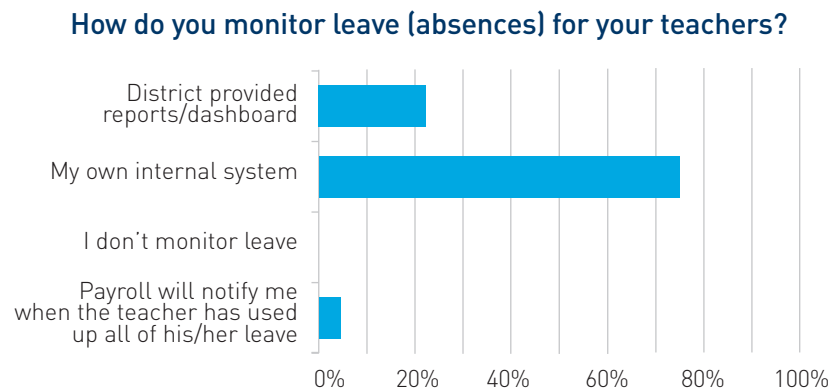
⁷³ Any absences of over 10 consecutive days were omitted for the purposes of this analysis so that long-term leaves, including long-term sick leave, would be excluded from the calculations.

⁷⁴ Teachers receive 14 days of leave per year. They may use leave “banked” from prior years or take unpaid days off if they are absent more than 14 days. The days noted here also include professional development days that teachers are out of the classroom. Those days often do not count as “absences” for payroll purposes.

⁷⁵ This is a conservative estimate assuming that all substitutes are paid at the lower day-to-day rate (\$100/ day) rather than the rate for extended substitutes working over 40 days per semester. No benefit costs have been included in the savings estimate.

⁷⁶ NCTQ defines teachers out on long-term leave as those who were out using wage continuation or worker’s compensation or teachers out for more than 10 days continuously. Absences for teachers who are out of the classroom for professional development are included in this analysis.

Pittsburgh's policies on absenteeism are comprehensive;⁷⁷ however, it is unclear what the consequences are for excessive absences. District policy does not require teachers to notify their principal directly when they will be absent. There is an automated process whereby they can log onto an electronic system to request a substitute. They may also call the school, but this is not required. While the district provides reports monitoring teacher attendance, in NCTQ's survey of school leaders, three-quarters of principals reported using their own internal systems for monitoring absences. The district notes that they are in the process of implementing a system that will provide an email notification to the teacher, school timekeeper and principal in cases of multiple absences.



Almost all principals use their own system to monitor leave, meaning that the district does not have systematic means in place to aggressively identify and deal with a teacher who is chronically absent.

5.3 There is evidence that some school leaders focus on teacher collaboration, shared decision making and a system of professional support.

It is nearly impossible to discuss teacher quality in a school district without addressing school leaders who help to guide and shape policies in their schools. Research has specifically shown that leadership focused on ensuring 1) that teachers have a say in how the school is managed, 2) that teachers work with one another on a regular basis and 3) that teachers receive professional support based on individualized needs results in teacher satisfaction that can affect retention, attendance and overall performance in the classroom.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ The PFT contract stipulates that teachers are required to provide a physician's note in any of the following circumstances: when an employee is absent both on a Friday and the following Monday, when the absence is three (3) days or more, when the employee is absent both the day before and the day after a holiday period, or when in the judgment of the immediate superior an employee appears to have used sick leave excessively in one (1) and two (2) day absences.

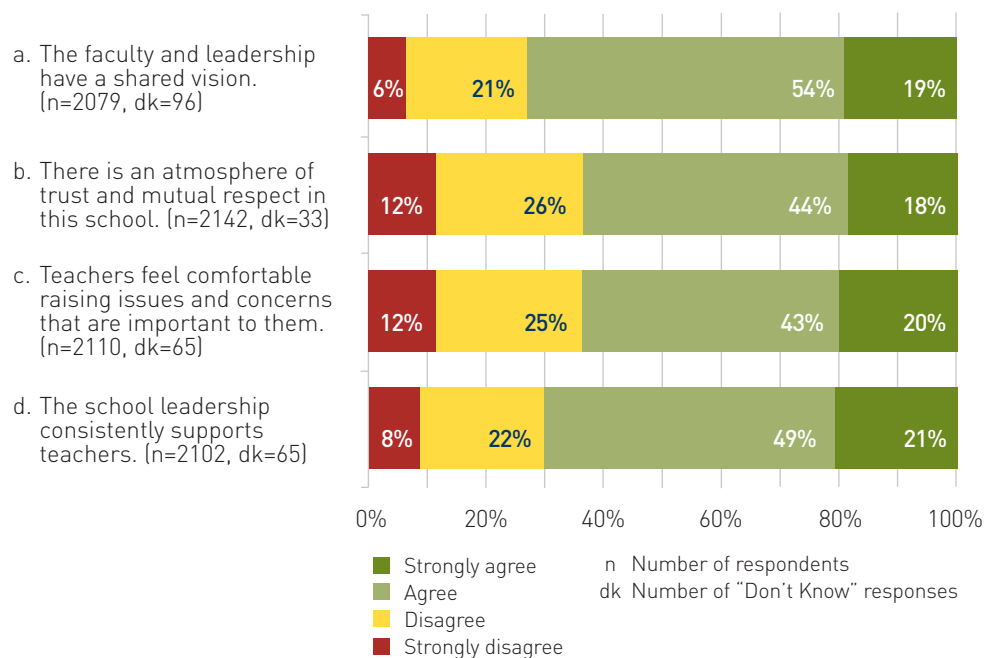
⁷⁸ Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Ing, M., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2010, October). The influence of school administrators on teacher retention decisions. *American Educational Research Journal*. Vol 38, no. 2. Pages 303-333.



Finding: In general, teachers in Pittsburgh have voiced feeling supported by school leadership in a variety of ways.

In the 2012 teaching and learning conditions survey of Pittsburgh teachers, the majority of teachers voiced positive feelings about their school leadership. Questions ranged from whether the leader and faculty had a shared vision for the school to whether teachers felt supported by their leaders. While the majority of responses were positive, about a third of teachers were unhappy with school leadership.

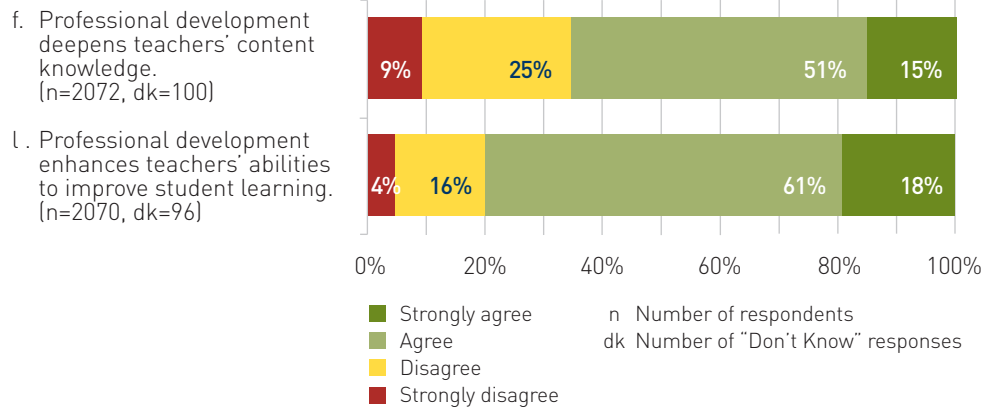
Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about school leadership in your school.



Finding: While teachers seem to be happy with the quality of professional development offered at the school level, views on district level professional development are not as positive.

In the 2012 teaching and learning conditions survey, teachers were positive about professional development at the school level, with the majority of teachers noting that it deepens their content knowledge and enhances their ability to improve student learning.

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about professional development in your school.



However, many anecdotal comments on NCTQ's teacher survey highlighted unhappiness with district-level professional development offerings.⁷⁹ While there are only two district-wide professional development days, the district does provide professional development opportunities year-round for teachers. Following are some of the teacher quotes:

"The district in-service should reflect the evaluation rubric. Provide according to the areas people struggle the most in – not just repeat content that has been done year after year."

"I believe that our district has moved away from a professional culture. 'Trainings' or 'PD' sessions are painful to attend most times... these sessions deliver mandates, deadlines and reams of paperwork that is too thick to reasonably use instructionally."

"District PD is very business-model oriented, school-based PD is more applicable to my teaching."

District-wide professional development days come at a hefty price tag, costing Pittsburgh about \$840,000 per day before factoring in the additional cost of materials and instructors. Given this expense and teachers' comments noted above, there is a definite opportunity to further analyze the structure and components of district-wide professional development days to make sure they are helpful to teachers. Given that the new evaluation system will provide more information on teacher needs, adjusting professional development in the future to be more individualized should be a high priority.

⁷⁹ While many comments were offered, we are not reporting aggregate data because of the overall low number of responses. Approximately 115 teachers responded to the survey.



Standard 5 Recommendations



1. **Lengthen the school day to eight hours.** A contractual eight-hour day will give teachers more formal opportunities to plan together as well as individually while also maximizing time with students. This is particularly helpful for elementary teachers, who currently have very little time for collaborative planning during the day.



2. **Ensure that schools are using the professional period to increase teaching and learning; if the day is extended to eight hours, use this time as additional instructional time.** The professional period can serve as a flexible opportunity for secondary teachers to use time based on specific needs. However, because there are many options for this time, an analysis of how it is currently being used can help the district develop recommended best practices for schools to employ. Schools and teachers should be able to articulate how this time is spent and provide evidence that it will support the development of teacher and/or student growth.



3. **Commend teachers with excellent attendance and develop a system that flags teachers who are chronically absent at the district level, with the central office following up with principals to make sure issues are resolved.** Teacher attendance is often indicative of larger school culture strengths or challenges. The district should provide principals with up-to-date teacher attendance data and work with chronically absent teachers to address the issues that cause absences.



4. **Require teachers to notify a principal when they will be absent.** Whether the absence will be for one day or five, notifying the supervisor directly is a policy that reminds both school leaders and teachers of the importance of being there every day and holds them accountable.



5. **Identify required professional development that must be done centrally and allow schools to prioritize other professional development according to their school and individual needs.** Teachers voiced concerns about the value of district-wide professional development. These days are costly, and the district should continuously consider both the structure and the relevance of what is offered, particularly as more information becomes available on what teachers need based on evaluation outcomes.



6. **Consider the best use of all noninstructional days, including those currently being used as clerical days.** Given the high per-diem cost of noninstructional days, the fact that four are being used for “clerical work” seems excessive. The district should repurpose these days to be used for either district or school-based professional development.



This recommendation requires only a change in practice.



This recommendation requires a formal negotiation between the district and the teachers' union.



This recommendation requires a change in state law.



Appendices

Requested Data	Notes	Is this data the district normally collects and reviews?	Was the data complete?	Was the data reliable and consistent ?
Overall district data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of schools in district Student enrollment 	The district provided general descriptive information for each school through the Pennsylvania Department of Education website.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Student background: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Racial/ethnic background of students Percentage of students on free/reduced lunch Percentage of students who are English language learners Student attendance 	The district provided information through the Pennsylvania Department of Education website.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher background: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Racial ethnicity of teachers 	The district provided information that met this request.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher background: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate institution 		Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher staff list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current school Subject area Full/Part-time status 	The district did not provide the subject area for teachers	Yes	Partial	Yes
Teacher seniority dates	The district provided information that met this request.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher employment offers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer dates Start dates 	The district does not keep track of dates positions are offered to teachers. Teachers' start dates in the school system are maintained and were provided.	Yes	Partial	Yes
Applicant pool <ul style="list-style-type: none"> number of total teacher vacancies each month number of total teacher applications received each month number of total teacher applications received each month number of total teacher vacancies filled each month 	The district did provide data on total numbers of applications received by certification area, but it is not tracked to the school level. They also were unable to provide data on when each position was filled.	Partial	Partial	No

Teacher internal placement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ number of teachers displaced teachers /involuntary transferred ■ number of teachers voluntarily transferred 	The district was able to provide the numbers of teachers who were displaced or involuntarily transferred on an annual basis.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Support for teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ number of teachers who entered intervention for poor performance 	The district provided information that met this request.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Retirements and resignations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Notification dates of teachers who resigned or retired ■ Effective dates of resignation/retirement 	The district was able to provide the effective dates of resignation/retirement but not the date employees notified the district.	Yes	Partial	Partial
Teacher dismissal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ number of tenured teachers dismissed as a result of poor performance ■ number of non-tenured teachers' contracts not renewed as a result of poor performance 	The district provided us district-wide data on dismissal, but the district did not provide this information on a school level.	Yes	Partial	Yes
Teacher retention: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ retention percentage, by school 	The district provided rosters by school by year from which we could determine this data.	Yes	Yes	N/A
Teacher performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Evaluation ratings ■ Value-added data 	The district provided aggregate data that met this request.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Salary schedule distribution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ number of teachers on each step of each lane of the salary schedule 	The district provided information that met this request.	Yes	Yes	Yes
End of career payouts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Payout for each teacher with unused sick leave or other, by type of leave ■ Total number of teachers who qualified for payouts for unused leave, by type of leave 	The district was unable to provide information that met this request.	No	N/A	N/A
Teacher attendance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All absences by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Type of absence ■ Date/day of week of absence ■ Long term leave identified 	The district was able to provide the type of absence and the date of absence. Long term leave was not identified.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Substitutes data: List of substitutes linked to teacher absence, by date.	The district provided this information, but it did not link to general teacher data	Yes	Yes	Yes
Professional Development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number of professional development hours by teacher by type 	The district shared PD schedules and weekly PD requirements for high school teachers	Partial	Partial	Yes
Bonus Pay: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ List of bonus/incentive pay awards for each teacher 	The district was able to provide the information that met this request.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Staffing timeline	The district was able to provide information that met this request.	Yes	Yes	Yes

Appendix B:

Description of Key Standards in the NCTQ Teacher Prep Review

Selection criteria: This standard evaluates admission requirements for elementary, secondary and special education teacher candidates to determine if they help ensure that programs are drawing from the top performing half of college students.

Early reading: Lectures, assignments and textbooks of required reading courses are examined to determine whether the training that teachers receive is in line with the findings of the National Reading Panel, the most authoritative source on how children learn to read.

Common Core elementary content: Analysts conduct a systematic check of core liberal arts courses required for college graduation and for elementary teacher preparation to ascertain how well they cover necessary teachable subjects other than the fine arts. The analysts also examine whether teacher candidates are required to develop a reasonable level of expertise in one teachable subject.

Common Core elementary math: This standard evaluates the specialized coursework elementary and special education teachers should take to gain the deep conceptual understanding of elementary math topics required to teach to the Common Core math standards. Programs meeting this standard in full not only require strong math content courses but also a math methods course in how to teach math.

Student teaching: This standard examines programs' standards for selecting cooperating teachers, programs' role in the selection process and the frequency with which the programs' supervisors observe and provide written feedback to student teachers.

Elementary Programs within 200 miles of Pittsburgh with strong ratings

Institution Name ¹	Overall	Selection criteria	Early reading	Common Core elementary mathematics	Common Core elementary content	Student teaching
Ohio State	3.5	4	3	4	3	2
University of Maryland-College Park	3	4	2	4	1	2
McDaniel College (Maryland)	3	4	3	4	1	2

1 Ohio State's program is graduate elementary and University of Maryland-College Park and McDaniel College's programs are undergraduate elementary.

Appendix C:

Pittsburgh Control Variables for Value-Added Measure

Pittsburgh takes into account student-level characteristics known to be associated with meaningful differences in student performance when calculating its value-added measure. In addition, teacher measures take into account class size and advanced class status.

Student control variables included in Pittsburgh's model include the following:

- Prior academic achievement
- Gender
- Race/ethnicity
- Free and reduced price lunch eligibility
- English language learner status
- Gifted program status
- Learning disability
- Emotional disturbance
- Health impairment
- Intellectual disability
- Autism
- Speech/language disability
- Physical/sensory disability
- Whether the parent ever applied for and received special services for youth
- School change
- Application for a magnet program
- Repetition of the current grade
- Student age
- Prior year absence rate
- Prior year rate of days suspended
- Whether a student was enrolled in Pittsburgh schools the entire prior academic year

This report is available online at
<http://www.nctq.org/districtPolicy/districtStudies.do>



National Council on Teacher Quality

1120 G Street, NW, Suite 800
Washington, D.C. 20005
Tel: 202 393-0020 Fax: 202 393-0095
Web: www.nctq.org

The National Council on Teacher Quality advocates for reforms in a broad range of teacher policies at the federal, state and local levels in order to increase the number of effective teachers.

Subscribe to NCTQ's free monthly newsletter tracking school district trends. Each month, we use data from NCTQ's Teacher Contract Database to highlight the latest trends in school district policies and collective bargaining agreements nationwide. The Teacher Contract Database contains teacher policies from 114 school districts and 2 charter management organizations, including the 50 largest districts, the largest district in each state, Broad Prize winners, Gates investment districts and members of the Council of the Great City Schools.

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